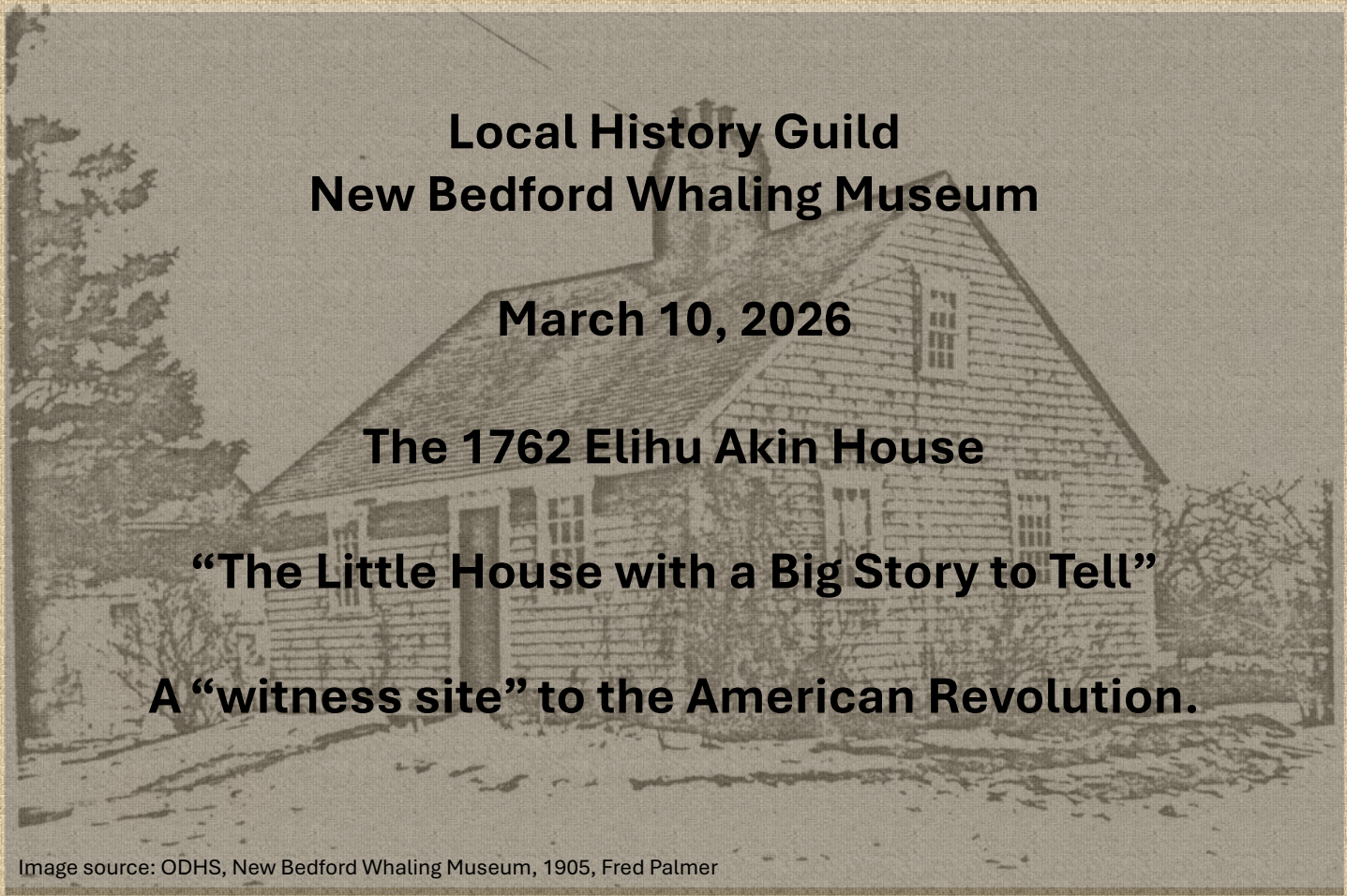




*Preserving our heritage from the foundation up.*

[www.dhpt.org](http://www.dhpt.org)



**Local History Guild  
New Bedford Whaling Museum**

**March 10, 2026**

**The 1762 Elihu Akin House**

**“The Little House with a Big Story to Tell”**

**A “witness site” to the American Revolution.**

Image source: ODHS, New Bedford Whaling Museum, 1905, Fred Palmer

## Why a **Witness Site** to the Revolution?

Most houses of this period are long gone or altered beyond recognition.

Unlike many other house museums, we operate as a study house, sparsely furnished to reveal the post and beam construction of this Georgian cape, its faithful conservation and restoration.

Built two years into the reign of King George III, this farmstead is a witness site to the American Revolution. This unique historic landmark includes a structure built on land owned by British subjects—the Akin family—and remarkably survived intact during the Revolution and all the way to the present day.

The Dartmouth Town Meeting Minutes (1760-1790s) serve as a record of the Akins' leadership roles in creating a local government over a period of transition from subservience to forging a new nation of self-determination.

During those decades, the Akins switched their allegiance from The Crown to the “Common Cause” for Independence.

The Akins acted as a family to defend their economic independence, even before the conflict escalated, which for them was most poignantly the British Raid in 1778.

## From One George to Another



Formal Portrait:  
King George III  
(The Casanova  
Exhibition at  
the MFA  
Fall 2018.)

Allan Ramsay  
British, 1713–1784

George III, 1757–58  
Oil on canvas

The British monarch George III (reigned 1760–1820) was indisputably the most elevated figure Casanova met in London. This portrait, painted shortly before he acceded to the throne, shows him in state robes, his coronet as Prince of Wales resting on the table. In fact, the painting helped facilitate the appointment of Ramsay—a Scotsman trained in Italy—in 1761 as the King's official painter. Casanova had arranged for his formal presentation to the new king and Queen Charlotte shortly after his arrival in 1763. He recalled that the king spoke to him in "such a low voice that I could not understand him and had to reply by a bow."

Oil loan from the Bank of England Museum



The Akin family  
due to their political  
ties to the provincial  
congress of  
Massachusetts  
had documented  
connections to the  
Founders,  
Benjamin Franklin  
and John Adams.



**Imagine this property as it may have appeared during the Revolution.**



Photographer and date once known.

- **What's behind the curtain of present-day commemorations of the momentous events of the American Revolution?**
- **We seek an intimate knowledge of Dartmouth's "freeholders and other inhabitants," and especially of their humanity.**
- **We can only speculate and connect the dots of their existence and relationships, to the land and events.**

**Genealogy**

**Land Deeds**

**Town Meeting Minutes**

**Quaker Meeting Minutes**

**Census Records**

**Burial Records**

**Tax Records**

**Wills & Bequests**

**Archaeology**

**Credible Historians**

## Genealogy

### John Akin            The Patriarch

**BIRTH** ABT 1663 • Portsmouth, Newport, Rhode Island  
**DEATH** 13 JUNE 1746 • Dartmouth, Bristol, Massachusetts

### John Akin's Role in Dartmouth

Prominent landowner and local politician (activist)

Two wives:

**Mary Briggs (1671-1708)**  
m. 1689    10 children

**Hannah Sherman (1682-1741)**  
m. 1711    6 children

David (1689-1779)  
Susannah (1691-1691)  
Deborah (1692-1743)  
Timothy (1695-1743)  
Mary Briggs (1697-1787)  
Hannah (1699-  
Thomas (1702-1775)  
Elizabeth (1704-1738)  
**James (1706-1804)**  
Judith (1708-1800)

**Benjamin (1715-1802)**  
Ebenezer (1716-1770)  
Susannah (1718-  
**Elihu (1720-1794)**  
Joseph (1722-1748)  
Abigail

### Parents:

**David Akin (1640-1671) and Mary ? (1640-?)**

**From: Aberdeen, Scotland**

**To: Portsmouth, Newport, Rhode Island**

**Other sons: James (1667-1727); David (1669-1686)**

### **Benjamin (1715-1802)**

*a prominent figure during the Revolution*

### **James (1706-1804)**

*Elihu's business partner*

*Daughter Amie (1738-before 1804) with  
husband Job Mosher (1737-before 1804)  
built the present-day Akin House in 1762.*

### **Elihu (1720-1794)**

*Shipbuilder and Tavern Owner with James*

### **Son Jonathan (1753-1799)**

*Captured by the British; imprisoned in  
France and freed in 1778.*

## Akin Family Land Deeds up to 1829

### A Small Sample of the Akin Family Deeds

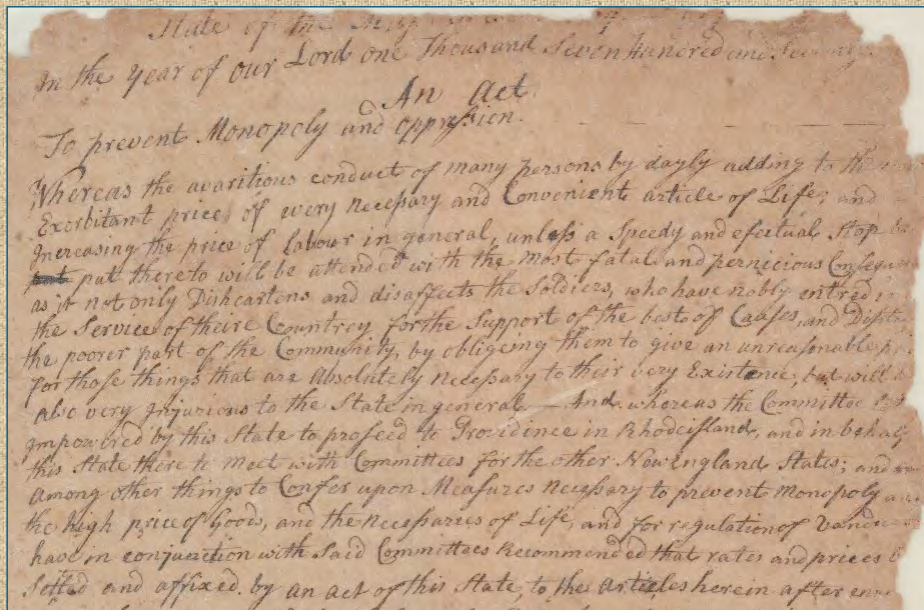
In Taunton Registry.				Date of Deed.	GRANTEES.	GRANTORS.	Location.	Character.	Book.	Page.
Time of Entry.	Book.	Page.								

1748	36	81	1747	Elihu	Ebenezer Akin	Dartmouth	warranty	5	169
1770	53	134	1769	Elihu	Jonathan Delano, Est.	Dartmouth	admis sale	9	24
1697	2	124	1659	James	John Briggs	Dartmouth	warranty	1	27
1723	15	176	1715	James	Benjamin Crane et al	Dartmouth	warranty	3	51
1753	39	378	1743	James	John Akin	Dartmouth	warranty	5	535
1753	40	94	1743	James	John Akin	Dartmouth	warranty	6	33
1761	45	262	1748	James et ali	Benjamin Akin	Pouquetsett Littlefield Orange Pouquetsett	Quitclaim	7	139

Courtesy of present-day John Ricketson and his research.

**Dartmouth Town Meeting Minutes  
1760-1796  
The Process of Establishing a Government**

**Sample Partial Page from 1777**



State of the Massachusetts Bay  
In the Year of our Lord one Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy Seven  
An Act  
To prevent Monopoly and Oppression.  
Whereas the avaritious conduct of many persons by daily adding to the now  
Exorbitant prices of every necessary and Convenient article of Life; and  
Increasing the price of Labour in general, unless a Speedy and effectual Stop be  
put thereto will be attended with the most fatal and pernicious Consequences  
as it not only Disheartens and disaffects the Soldiers, who have nobly entered in  
the Service of their Country for the Support of the best of Causes, and Distresses  
the poorer part of the Community, by obliging them to give an unreasonable price  
for those things that are Absolutely necessary to their very Existence, but will be  
also very injurious to the State in general. And whereas the Committee appointed  
by this State to proceed to Providence in Rhode Island, and in behalf  
of this State there to meet with Committees for the other New England States; and  
among other things to Confer upon Measures necessary to prevent Monopoly and  
the high price of Goods, and the necessaries of Life, and for regulation of  
Labour in conjunction with Said Committees Recommended that rates and prices be  
Settled and affixed by an act of this State, to the articles herein after enumerated.

State of the Massachusetts Bay  
In the Year of our Lord one Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy-Seven  
An Act  
To prevent Monopoly and Oppression.  
Whereas the avaricious conduct of many persons by daily adding to the now  
Exorbitant prices of every necessary and Convenient article of Life; and  
Increasing the price of labour in general, unless a Speedy and effectual Stop  
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Meet with Committees for the other New England States; and among other  
things to Confer upon Measures Necessary to prevent Monopoly and the  
high price of Goods, and the necessaries of Life, and for regulation of  
Labour have in conjunction with Said Committees Recommended that rates and  
prices be Settled and affixed by an act of this State, to the articles  
herein after enumerated.

**Note: Transcribed using AI**

Source: Dartmouth Town Clerk; "In Our Own Words" Transcription Project, Westport Historical Society and Dartmouth Historical & Arts Society.

**Dartmouth Quaker Meeting Minutes  
1699-1796  
The Process of Establishing Norms and Standards**

**The Case against John Akin (1745-1801), Elihu Akin's son (1720-1794)**

March 16, 1778 (Vol. 2, page 951) Cited for bearing arms.

*Complaint a  
gains: J Akin* The Overseers Inform that **John Akin** hath appeared in bearing of Arms and hath been Treated with by friends but declines to Condemn the same there-fore **John Williams** and **Joseph Tucker Junr** to Treat further with him on that account, and also on account of his Neglecting to attend our Meetings and to make report next Monthly meeting

July 19, 1779 (Vol. 2, page 967): John Akin disowned.

September 20, 1779 (Vol 2, page 970): Refusal to lay down arms.

It appears that the Meeting won't give up on him.

*Testimony  
of denial  
against  
J Akin* Whereas **John Akin** having had a Right of membership with us out hath so far deviated from our Christian profession as to appear withn Military Company under Armes in order for defence for which he hath been Laboured with in Love in order to reclame him, but it not having the desired Effect, and he continuing to Justify the Practice or reather not to retract it, we think it necessary, for the Clearing of Truth and friends to give this forth as a publick Testimony against him.

*2 month  
1777*

A Manumition was Read in this meeting Signed by **John Akin** thereby manumiting an Indian boy Named **Hazzard** which is accepted for Satisfaction

*John Akin  
manimitt  
Indian boy  
named Hazzard*

**Another John Akin?**

John Akin (1734-1796)

James's son (1706-1804)

*(plausible)*

John Akin (1767-1808))

Benjamin's son (1715-1802)

*(not plausible)*

# 1790 Census Records

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An Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the town of <i>Dartmouth</i>		<i>Dartmouth</i> continued.					<i>Dartmouth</i> continued.				
Names of Heads of Families.	Free white Males of 16 years and upwards.	Free white Males under 16 years.	Free white Females.	All other free Persons.	Slaves.	Names of Heads of Families.	Free white Males of 16 years and upwards.	Free white Males under 16 years.	Free white Females.	All other free Persons.	Slaves.
<i>Gollins Smith</i>	69	45	114	9		<i>Chenevier Mosher</i>	137	93	225	18	
<i>Benjamin Smith</i>	3	2	3			<i>Benjamin Mosher</i>	1	-	1		

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<i>Timothy Akin</i>	1	1	2		
<i>Jonathan Akin</i>	1	1	2		
<i>William Nelson</i>	1	1	3		
<i>Saleb Sherman</i>	1	2	4		
<i>John Pickerson</i>	3	-	2		
<i>Ellis Akin</i>	3	3	4		
<i>Mary Sherman</i>	-	1	3		
<i>William Pickerson</i>	2	3	3		
<i>Stephen Mosher</i>	1	-	2		
<i>James Akin</i>	2	1	1		
<i>John Tripp</i>	1	-	3		
<i>Richard Akin</i>	1	-	3		
<i>Henry Wait</i>	1	2	4		
<i>Jacob Akin</i>	1	1	2		

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<i>Bed Gushman</i>	1	1	5		
<i>John Akin</i>	2	1	5		
<i>Joseph Almy</i>	2	1	5		
<i>Anthony Almy</i>	1	-	4		

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<i>John Shepard</i>	3	2	4		
<i>Benjamin Akin</i>	1	-	-		
<i>Job Akin</i>	1	3	1		
<i>Jerusha Smith</i>	-	-	2		

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<i>Joseph Howland Jr.</i>	3	-	3		
<i>William Akin</i>	1	1	2		
<i>Cleaver Smith</i>	1	-	2		

Source: Ancestry.com.



## It's All about the Stories

### **Benjamin Akin, Esquire (1715-1802)**

**Benjamin Akin, a tanner, currier, and activist politician during the Revolution** and Elihu Akin's (1720-1794) older half-brother. He married Eunice Taber (1711-1762) in 1739 who bore him ten children; with wife Lydia Almy Wing (1733-1767), married in 1763, sired three more children. After 1767, he married Widow Barker (Elizabeth Howland). He died in Dartmouth in 1802 at the age of 87.

### **Jonathan Akin (1753-1799), Elihu Akin's son (1720-1794)**

#### **Jonathan Akin Rescued by Benjamin Franklin and John Adams**

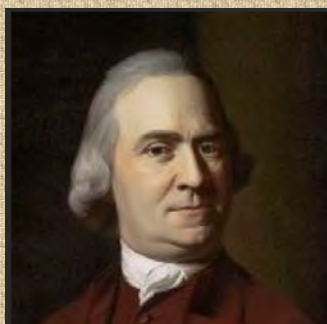
In 1777-8, Elihu's fifth child, Jonathan (1753-1799), was suffering through a great turmoil of his own. Captured by the British on a ship sailing from Dartmouth, possibly a ship belonging to his father. He escaped from prison and made his way onto a British ship headed south. The ship was captured by a French warship and Akin was imprisoned again. Shortly after the British raid on the Apponagansett River (Akins Wharf), Jonathan, as a prisoner of war, wrote to Benjamin Franklin asking for help. Both Benjamin Franklin and John Adams worked to secure his release from the Granville prison in France. Freed in early 1779, he returned to Dartmouth, married Mary Sherman (1760-1813) in 1782 and had one son, William Howland Akin (1783-1828), before his death in 1799.

## Benjamin Akin, Esq., A Patriot of Some Notoriety (1715-1802)

***Based on the Town Meeting records from 1760-1796, Benjamin Akin, Esq. was one of the most prominent and active civic leaders in the community, serving in high-level administrative and judicial capacities, and in various roles seeking independence from the British Crown.***

An influential politician on behalf of the “Common Cause,” his fearless political activism resulted in a rise to important positions in Dartmouth, representing Dartmouth as a delegate to the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, first elected in 1774. In 1780, he had a hand in developing the Massachusetts Constitution.

As a prominent member of the Committees of Correspondence and Safety, he was selected to draft a letter to Samuel Adams, dated July 29, 1774, stating in no uncertain terms that the rebels of Dartmouth can be relied upon to serve as brothers-in-arms for the “Common Cause.”



Samuel Adams (1722-1803),  
John Singleton Copley.  
Source: Museum of Fine Arts.

[Note: Benjamin Akin’s Daybook and Ledger (1737-1764) features entries and accounts on his life and times in Dartmouth and are available for research at the New Bedford Whaling Museum, *Inventory of the Akin Family Papers.*]

*Dartmouth July 29th 1774*

*Dear Sir / The Barer hereof, has Brought with him Dartmouth Resolves and we have at Last made Choice of a Committee of Correspondence, — hope Now we shall be able to have the Early & best Intelligences from all Quarters, should be glad you would send me your opinion in Wrihting what the result of the Town of Boston in respecting the Late New Acts of Parlement, which are to take place the first day of August Next and all other Towns in this province, so far as you have Collected; it appears to me Very Necessary for Every Town in the Government to Know one anothers Mind, in the affair & act on one plan; I trust we shall not have one man in Dartmouth, will Take any office under the New Regulation of Parlement, it Appears to me, if there is any force in the Late acts of Parlement, they have sett us a float, that is have thrown us omit a state of Nature: we Now have a fair opportunity of Choosing what form of government we think proper; and, Contract with any Nation we pleas; for a King to Rule over us—as the Parlement has been pleas'd to Vacate part of our Charter, if they had a Right to take away part, they must have a Right to take the whole: and when Ever affairs come to be settled; it Would be Best for us to form a New Charter for ourselves, that will be Most agreeable to us; and Now Sir, I desire that you will be so kind, as to Inform me into Every thing that is Necessary for the supporting of the Common Cause, and send by the Barer Mr William Tallman, who is one of Our Committee of Correspondence you Compliance, will greatly oblige your frd & Humble Servt. to Cmd— Benjn Akin To Mr. Samll Adams in Boston*

**Excerpt from the Dartmouth Town Meeting Minutes during 1778  
and before the British Raid of September 5 & 6, 1778**

This shows Benjamin Akin in action serving as Justice of the Peace.

The image shows a handwritten document on aged, yellowed paper with a dark border. The text is written in cursive and records several instances of citizens taking oaths of allegiance and fidelity before Benjamin Akin, who is identified as the Justice of the Peace. The entries are dated from May to July 1778. The text is as follows:

... 1778. Then Holder Slocum Took the Oath of Allegiance & Fidelity before me — Benjamin Akin Justice of the Peace  
May A.D. 1778. Jonathan Slocum & Jonas Slocum Took the <sup>Affirmation</sup> Oath of Allegiance & Fidelity before me — Benj<sup>a</sup>. Akin Justice of the Peace  
June 1<sup>st</sup> Day 1778. Samuel Wilcox Took the Oath of Allegiance & Fidelity before me — Benj<sup>a</sup>. Akin Justice of the Peace  
June 17<sup>th</sup> Day 1778. Timothy Cornell Took the Affirmation of Allegiance & Fidelity to the State of the Massachusetts Bay: as Did all the above named persons. — Benj<sup>a</sup>. Akin Justice of the Peace  
July 4<sup>th</sup> Day 1778 Then Isaac Vinson Took the Oath of Allegiance & Fidelity before me. — Benj<sup>a</sup>. Akin Justice of the Peace

**Excerpt from the Dartmouth Town Meeting Minutes during 1788  
Ten Years after the British Raid of September 5 & 6, 1778**

This shows Benjamin Akin in action serving as Town Clerk.

At a Town Meeting Legally Warned and held at the Town Hall  
Dartmouth December 4<sup>th</sup> day 1788. for the choice of a Representative for the  
Congress: Phaniel Bishop had Eight votes. George Leonard had six votes  
at said Meeting Chose Electors (viz) Halden Slocum had nine, Phaniel Bishop  
had five votes. David Cobb had three votes, Walter Spooner had three votes William  
had two votes. Recorded by Benjamin Akin Town Clerk

**The following letter from Jonathan Akin to Franklin, written in Granville on November 10, 1778, tells his tale:**

ALS: American Philosophical Society

1778

*Honoured Sir*

*I make Bold to Rite these Lines to Let you know my Condition about Eighteen months ago I was taken in a Ship from Bedford in Dartmouth Bound to Bourdaux By an English frigit and Carred into porchmouth where I was put in prison I Staid there Six weeks and then I made my Escape to London where I found a gentelman that had Lived at Nantucket and there I Staid till about Six weeks ago and we Disagreed and I was obliged to Ship myself or Be prest to go on board of a man of war and I Shiped my Self mate of a marchnt Ship to go to the Braziels and on the Tewetieth of october We was taken By a french Ship the Capt and all the peopel taken out of the Vessell and Carred in to Brest & Staid onbord of the Vessell and She Came into this port whare I am at preasent I told the gentelmen of this place how that I Belonged to amaricar and I was obliiged to Be in the English Servis and Now thank god I am Clear of it and I Beg the Liberty of going home I have Nothing to Show that I Belong to amaricar when we was taken By the English all my papers was taken from me But I Dare Say you know Benjamin Akin one of the Congress for Boston I am Nephew to him Elihu Akin Living in Dartmouth is my Father—9 I Beg the favour of you to Let them know here that I Belong to Amaricar So that I may git home the gentelmen of this place advised me to Rite to you I Beg that you would assist me for I am in a bad Condition1*

*From your humble Servant*

*Jonathan Akin*

## **Benjamin Akin exerts his influence over Founders, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, to Obtain the Release of his Nephew**

*Addressed: For / the Honoured Dr / Franklin / Att Parris*

*Notation by John Adams: Jona. Akin, Prisoner*

*[Note numbering follows the Franklin Papers source.]*

[9](#). Benjamin Akin was first elected to the Mass. Provincial Congress in 1774; see *The Journals of Each Provincial Congress of Massachusetts in 1774 and 1775 . . .* (Boston, 1838) under Aikin. The Akin family were early proprietors in Dartmouth: Daniel Ricketson, *The History of New Bedford, Bristol County, Massachusetts . . .* (New Bedford, 1858), p. 180.

[1](#). When the commissioners wrote (Gabriel de) Sartine on Jan. 7, requesting liberty for Americans taken prisoners on English ships, they included Akin in their list.



## The Interpretative History Continues

**Integral to DHPT's overall strategy to maximize the educational experience of the site, the Akin House serves as a living history classroom telling particular stories of the mid-18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> C.—most important, its place during Dartmouth's Revolutionary War era when namesake Elihu Akin (1720-1794) switched alliances from the Crown to the cause for independence, in large part influenced by the economics of the time.**

**In September 1778, Akin — a wealthy merchant of the Colonies, a shipbuilder, presumably privateering, a well-known politician, may have lost his holdings when his property was destroyed by Loyalists & the British. In November 1778, he moved to the homestead we now call the Elihu Akin House which he purchased in 1769. He lived there with his wife & family until his death. His descendants inhabited or leased the house until 2003.**

Prepared by Diane Gilbert