

REVOLUTIONARY TIDBITS

By Christine Comiskey

Many times, while working on a historical research project, I come across something that sends me off in a completely different direction. Such was the case when I was looking through old Rowley West Parish birth records and came across this curious entry recorded by Reverend James Chandler: *Archebald Dawson, son of Peter Dawson, a British soldier (who, with his wife & three other soldiers & their wives, live in the parish as prisoners of war) born 13 January, 1777.*

I had never heard or read about prisoners of war being kept in Rowley West Parish, so I of course had to learn more. We had no known jail, so where were they kept, and by whom? Unfortunately, after hours of scouring the internet, and more hours pouring over the old handwritten Rowley and Rowley West Parish records, I came away with little more than tired eyes. No mention of the prisoners—very disappointing. Their story will continue to be a mystery. Maybe another researcher will solve it someday. I am, however, grateful that Reverend Chandler's notation about Archebald's birth gave us a hint of this little chapter in our history.

However...I did come across another interesting tidbit in the Rowley records: *March 13, 1777: It was put to the town to see if they would build a house to put the town's stock of ammunition in. Past in the negative. Voted that part of said stock be removed to the meeting house in the West Parish in said town and the selectmen to do the same when a suitable place is prepared for it.*

They were storing ammunition in the meeting house, where people worshipped? And the parishoiners didn't have a problem with that? Yikes!



Old South Meeting House