

# Extracts from the Diary of Dr. Amos Alexander Evans 1812-1813

Surgeon United States Navy

Miss M. Howard Ash

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Amos Alexander Evans was born five miles north of Elkton, on November 26th, 1785, being the eldest son of John Evans and Mary (Alexander) Evans.

Possessed of a fondness for literary pursuits and a great talent for medicine and surgery, he studied medicine under Dr. George E. Mitchell, of Elkton, and the celebrated Dr. Rush, of Philadelphia.

While stationed at the Charlestown Navy Yard he met the beautiful Miss Mary Oliver, of Boston, a lady of rare culture and liberal education (whom the writer distinctly remembers). Dr. Evans and Miss Oliver were married March 28th, 1816, and soon after came to Elkton, where he practiced till his death. The entrance of Dr. Evans and his bride into the town of Elkton was fitting the day and generation, being by stage coach, down Red Hill. The journey from Boston had been accomplished by coach and vessel; the last lap of the trip was from Philadelphia by stage coach, over the famous "Old Post Road."

Three children were born to Dr. Evans and his wife, the eldest, Alexander Evans, who became one of the most noted lawyers of the day. He was Congressman from this district and on more than one occasion was called to Washington to advise Abraham Lincoln during the war between the States. The contrasts of that exciting period are illustrated by Mr. Evans' brother-in-law, William Howard May, of Elkton, being a staunch supporter of the Confederacy and fighting for it through the whole struggle.

Mr. Alexander Evans married Miss Mary Charles Manly, a brilliant leader of society and a noted wit, by whom he had one son, Alexander Evans, Jr., who died February 2d, 1915. He married Ann Eliza Howard, daughter of Mr. William P. Howard, of "Randalia," who was his second cousin. She survives him and resides with his mother in the handsome Evans home on Main Street, Elkton, the birthplace of the second son of Dr. Evans.

Andrew Wallace Evans inherited his father's love for military service and entered the United States Army; he was graduated from West Point in 1852. He served with distinction in the Far West and was retired a general. On his return to Elkton to live he married Miss Susan A. Tuite, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Aaron G. Tuite, who is descended from one of Ireland's most aristocratic families and who was exceedingly handsome. They had no children and both are now deceased.

Mary Evans, the only daughter of Dr. Amos A. Evans, was also born in the old Evans homestead. Being highly educated and widely read, she was a most delightful conversationalist. She was a proficient French scholar. Fond of traveling, she made several trips abroad. She married James W. Clayton, a member of the old Clayton family, of Cecil County, by whom she had one son, Paul Clayton, now of Haverford, Pa. The writer cherishes the memory of a lifelong friendship for Mrs. Clayton, who died several years ago.

Dr. Evans was appointed assistant surgeon in the United States Navy by President Jefferson September 1st, 1808. Shortly after this he was commissioned surgeon; later on fleet surgeon. After the close of the War of 1812 Dr. Evans was stationed at Charlestown Navy Yard and embraced this opportunity to attend medical lectures at Harvard University, from which he was graduated with high honors August 30th, 1814.

The United States Government so appreciated the heroic services of Dr. Evans in the engagements with the "Guerriere" and "Java" that Congress awarded him two handsome silver medals, one containing the bust of Commodore Hull and the other the bust of Commodore Bainbridge. One of these medals I have seen. For full description see Johnston's "History of Cecil County," page 491.

A strong friendship existed between Commodore Bainbridge and Dr. Evans, which, in his modest way, he refers to in the following extracts from his Diary:

JUNE 11TH, 1812

Left the Navy Yard at Washington on the U. S. Frigate "Constitution" July 5th, sailed from Annapolis. Out the capes on the 12th for a cruise. Spoke a Brig from New Orleans for Baltimore, informed her War had been declared against England. 16th, sighted English vessels [describes placing of guns on the "Constitution" and chase of the enemy]. At 8.30 A. M. on the 19th all ships in chase stood to northward and eastward of us, out of

sight in a few minutes. Thus terminated a disagreeable chase of nearly three days.

Boarded the American ship "Dieava" from Lisbon to Baltimore. She is a handsome copper-bottomed ship. The boarding officer was told that a corpse which then lay on the quarter deck was our late Consul to Lisbon, Mr. Jefferson, a nephew of the late President, who had died that morning. On board were \$80,000 in specie.

JULY 22ND.—Spoke a Danish ship four days out from New York, from her we procured some late New York newspapers and learned Commodore Rodgers' squadron had returned from chasing the Jamaican fleet. We also learned from the papers that the "Wasp" had arrived in the Delaware from Cowes.

FRIDAY, JULY 24TH, 1812.—Caught a large cod fish in 100 fathoms of water.

SATURDAY, JULY 25TH.—A large butterfly was caught on the deck at noon today. Query: Did it fly from land? At 6 P. M. discovered land ahead, supposed Cape Ann.

SUNDAY, JULY 26TH.—Beating toward Boston light-house, which is situated on a small island on the right side of the entrance of principal channel and has a very good revolving light.

MONDAY, JULY 27TH.—In afternoon went to Exchange Coffee House, perhaps the best building of the kind in the United States. The residents of Boston cheered Captain Hull as he passed up State Street.

The Frigate "Chesapeake" is now repairing at the Navy Yard at Charlestown.

So confident were the people of Boston that the "Constitution" had been captured and taken to Halifax, a friend of one of the officers forwards letters of Credit to him at that place.

Will the United States receive any assistance from the Eastern States in the prosecution of the present War? Judging from present symptoms, I fear not. Good God! is it possible that the people of the United States, who enjoy the blessings of freedom under the only Repub-

lican Government on earth, have not virtue enough to support it?

THURSDAY, JULY 30TH.—Paid a visit to Mr. W. Hollingsworth at Task's Tavern in Bloomfield Lane and dined with him.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 9TH.—Boarded British Merchant Brig "Lady Warren"; after bringing on board the Captain, Supercargo, together with Mate, 6 seamen and their private property, we set fire to the Brig in several places; she continued to burn for several hours. Such are the dreadful concomitant evils of a state of War.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14TH.—We were alarmed about 9 o'clock with the cry of fire in the cockpit. Produced by one of the Surgeon's Mates having left a candle burning in his state room, with a locked door. We found considerable difficulty in opening the door, in attempting to force which I had my right hand jammed with a crow bar, in consequence I am under the necessity of writing with my left. I have labored under great pain all day, and am much afraid it will terminate in Tetanus. The cry of fire is dreadful on shore, but ten thousand times more dreadful on board a *powder ship at sea*. It produced much confusion, but was instantly extinguished.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19TH.—At 2 P. M. discovered a large sail to seaward, made sail and stood down for her. At 4 we discovered her to be a large Frigate; when we were within about 2 or 2 and a half miles, she hoisted the English colours and fired a gun. We stood towards her without showing our colours, she then commenced firing and gave us several broadsides, without much effect. Before we commenced firing she kept wavering several times, with a view probably of trying to get the weather gauge of us, which we averted by wavering also. We hoisted our colours and fired the first gun fifteen minutes past 5 o'clock P. M. but did not come into close action until about 6 o'clock, and after 25 minutes from the time we were closely engaged, she struck, having previously lost all three of her masts, hull was much in-

jured. Several of her guns were dismantled, or otherwise rendered useless on the gun deck. By one shot she had 15 men killed and 62 wounded, most of them very dangerously, immense mischief and destruction having been done by our grape and canister shot.

We had killed :

William S. Bush, 1st Lt. Marines.  
Jacob Sago, Seaman.  
John Brown, Seaman.  
Caleb Smith, Seaman.  
James Ashford, Seaman.  
Robert Brice, Seaman.  
James Reed, Seaman.

Wounded :

Charles Morris, 1st Lt. (dangerously).  
J. A. Alywin, Master (slightly).  
Richard Dunn, Seaman (dangerously).  
Daniel Lewis, Seaman (dangerously).  
—— Taylor, Seaman (slightly).  
—— Muller, Marine (slightly).  
George Reynolds, Seaman (slightly).

Besides 4 or 5 others so slightly as not to be disabled from coming to quarters.

During the engagement she came against our stern twice, it was when she was in that situation that Lt. Morris and Lt. Bush were shot. Mr. Morris just jumped in the topsail with an intention of boarding her, when he fell; Mr. Bush took his place as he left it and was instantly shot, one musket shot entered his face and passed into his brain. Little or no other injury was done at that time when quarter deck and fore-castle were completely swept.

Her Second Lieutenant was killed and the Captain, 1st Lt., Sailing Master and one of the Master's Mates wounded. She hoisted three or four flags at the commencement of the engagement, and struck after she got clear of our stern.

After she struck, the Captain, Js. Rd. Dacres, Esq., came on board and informed us that it was the Britan-

nic Majesties Ship "La Guerriere." We sent Lt. Weedon on board, and finding the ship in a condition we considered dangerous in attempting getting in, we were employed all night getting the men and crew from on board.

She mounted 49 guns and had about from 260 to 300 men, having lost previously part of her crew in prizes. Captain Dacres is a pleasant agreeable young man 24 years of age.

Our crew labored very nobly, they fought like heroes, and gave 3 cheers when the colours were hoisted, they also cheered when the masts of the enemy went over her sides, and also when her colours were struck.

Whilst she was on our stern, one of her forward guns was run nearly into our cabin windows and fired, but fortunately did little or no execution. A shot that entered our afterport on the starboard side of the gun deck killed 2 men at the after gun and wounded one.

From the firing of the first gun to the close of the action was one hour and ten minutes. The "Guerriere" had 15 killed and 62 wounded.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20TH.—Laying to all day getting the men and their effects from the "Guerriere." Assisted Dr. Irwin, surgeon of the "Guerriere," to dress his wounded, and amputated 2 arms and one thigh, then amputated the leg of Richard Dunn.

Had no sleep all last night, dressing wounded men as they were brought on board, after dressing all our own wounded.

About 3 or 4 o'clock, having got all the men from the "Guerriere," we set fire to her, and before the officers were on board she blew up, presenting a sight the most incomparably grand and magnificent I have ever experienced, no painter, no poet or historian could give on canvas or paper any description that could do justice to the scene. In the evening we committed the body of Lt. Bush and one of the "Guerriere" men who died of his wounds to the deep.

AUGUST 21ST.—Employed all day repairing our rigging from the damage from the enemies shot, etc. [It will be noted Dr. Evans performed all this surgical work while his *right hand* was injured, as it had been less than a week since his painful accident.]

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29TH.—Beating up Massachusetts Bay, sight Boston lighthouse.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 30TH.—The wind not permitting us to lay thro' the narrows, we went into Nantucket Roads and anchored. Sent the wounded prisoners to Hospital on Quarantine Island. A number of boats came around the ship attracted by curiosity.

MONDAY, AUGUST 31ST.—Saw 4 ships and a brig this morning at daylight, supposed them to be the enemy, trying to cut us off. By the time we arrived at the narrows we discovered they were American Frigates; they proved to be the "President," Commodore Rodgers; "United States," Decatur; "Congress," Smith; "Hornet," Laurence, and Brig "Argus," Sinclair.

We ran up near the Navy Yard and anchored. As we passed a large wharf we were saluted with huzzas, a great concourse of people from that place and different Merchant vessels. Commods. Decatur and Bainbridge, Captains Laurence and Sinclair came on board and a number of other officers, and the vessel was crowded all day with citizens.

[Lack of space forbids Dr. Evans' delightful description of the elaborate dinner tendered them, the officers, by the citizens of Boston in Faneuil Hall on Saturday, September 5th.]

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8TH.—Dr. Irwin and Lt. Keat of the "Guerriere" visited us today; they are highly delighted with the attention that has been paid them by the citizens of Boston, say they are overpowered with invitations to dine, etc.

TUESDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER, 1812.—Today Captain Hull resigned the command of the "Constitution" to Captain Bainbridge. The crew expressed much dissatisfaction at

the change, and gave Captain Hull 3 hearty cheers as he left the ship. The scene was most affecting.

SEPTEMBER 17TH.—Dined with Commd. Bainbridge by invitation, in company with Lieutenants Brown, Hoffman and Contee.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27TH.—Weighed anchor and stood out to sea, with the "Hornet" in company.

DECEMBER 29TH.—Strange sail coming up with us. We hoisted our ensign and the strange ship hoisted the English ensign. At 1.15 the sail was gaining on us, discovered it to be a Frigate at 1.37. Stood for the enemy, having previously cleared for action. At 1.45 she hove down, intending to rake us, which we avoided. At 4 minutes of 2 P. M. we fired a broadside at her, when she bore up and returned it. She was at that time distant one mile. Another broadside from us and the action commenced.

[Here are technical descriptions of masts, rigging and the falling of the same.]

At 4.50 we stood for the enemy, at 5.25 got ahead of her in a raking position and were about to give the order to fire when she struck her colours, at which our crew gave three hearty cheers, as they had done when we first beat to quarters and several times during the action. 6 P. M. we sent a cutter with Lt. Parker on board, which returned with 1st Lt. Chadds, wounded. The Captain being mortally wounded, delivered his sword together with his Majesties ship "Java," Ratio 38, but mounting 47 guns, Henry Lambert, Esq., Captain.

Employed during the night in taking the officers and crew from ship. She had aboard, killed and wounded, the exact number could not be ascertained. Their own account was Killed and wounded, 105. She had on board in all about 450; she was six weeks out from England, bound to Bombay.

On board were Lt. General Hyslop and suite, consisting of Major Walker and Captain Wood, a surgeon's mate, Lt. of Marines and second Lieutenant, passengers,

together with Captain ——, a master and commander, who were actively employed.

On our part were Killed :

Jonas Ougrean, Seaman.  
Joseph Adams, Seaman.  
Patrick Connor, Seaman.  
Barney Hart, Seaman.  
John Cherres, Seaman.  
Mark Snow, Seaman.  
Jno. D. Allen, Seaman.  
William Cooper, Seaman.  
Thomas Haman, Private Marine.

Wounded :

Wm. Bainbridge, Commander (severely).  
Jno. C. Aylwin, Lt. (dangerously).  
Chas F. Waldo, M. M. (amputated thigh).  
Lewis German, M. M. (slightly).  
Peter Wardbury, 2nd (severely).  
Jno. Clements, Seaman (amputated leg).  
Joseph P. Cherres, Seaman (amputated arm).  
Joseph Ward, Seaman (amputated thigh).  
Phillip Brimblecomb, Seaman (amputated arm).  
Nich. Eixtan, Seaman (slightly).  
William Long, Seaman (dangerously).  
Stephen Webb, Seaman (mortally).  
Reuben Sanchise, Seaman (mortally).  
William Weedon, Seaman (slightly).  
Enos Bateman, Seaman (dangerously).  
Js. D. Hammond, Seaman (slightly).  
Peter Veni, Seaman (severely).  
Stephen Sheppard, Seaman (slightly).  
Alijah Eddy, Seaman (slightly).  
Phillip Cook, Seaman (slightly).  
Saml. Brown, Ord. S. (severely).  
David Hogan, S. (severely).  
Thos. Williams, 3rd (slightly).  
Jno. Vogel (severely).  
Anthony Recour, Marine (slightly).  
Jno. Elwell (slightly).  
Mich. Chesley (slightly).

A few more were slightly wounded, but not sufficiently to require particular notice. Employed all night in getting the prisoners and baggage on board.

DECEMBER 30TH.—Employed all day repairing damages, which were trifling, and getting the “Java’s” baggage on board.

DECEMBER 31ST, 3 P. M.—Having taken all the private baggage, set fire to the “Java” and blew her up. The explosion was not so grand as that of the “Guerriere,” as the magazine only took fire. Immediately after blowing up the prize we stood out for land.

JANUARY 1ST, 1813.—Discovered a strange sail to be the “Hornet” with a schooner and a ship in company, prizes, the former supposed to be worth \$150,000, the latter a prize to the “Java.” At 11.30 we dropped anchor and Captain Laurence came on board; the “Hornet” came alongside, manned the tops and saluted us with three cheers, which we returned.

Went into the harbor of St. Salvador, landed the officers and men, prisoners on parole, on condition they return to England.

Uneventful voyage for days, several wounded died of fever produced by wounds.

JANUARY 29TH.—John Cushing Aylwin died of fever caused by wounds. A braver man never lived.

FEBRUARY 15TH, 1813.—In sight of Cape Ann, beating up to Boston lighthouse. About 11 o’clock a pilot came on board.

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I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true; I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live up to what light I have. I must stand with anybody that stands right; stand with him while he is right.

—*Abraham Lincoln.*

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I was born an American; I live an American; I shall die an American.—DANIEL WEBSTER.