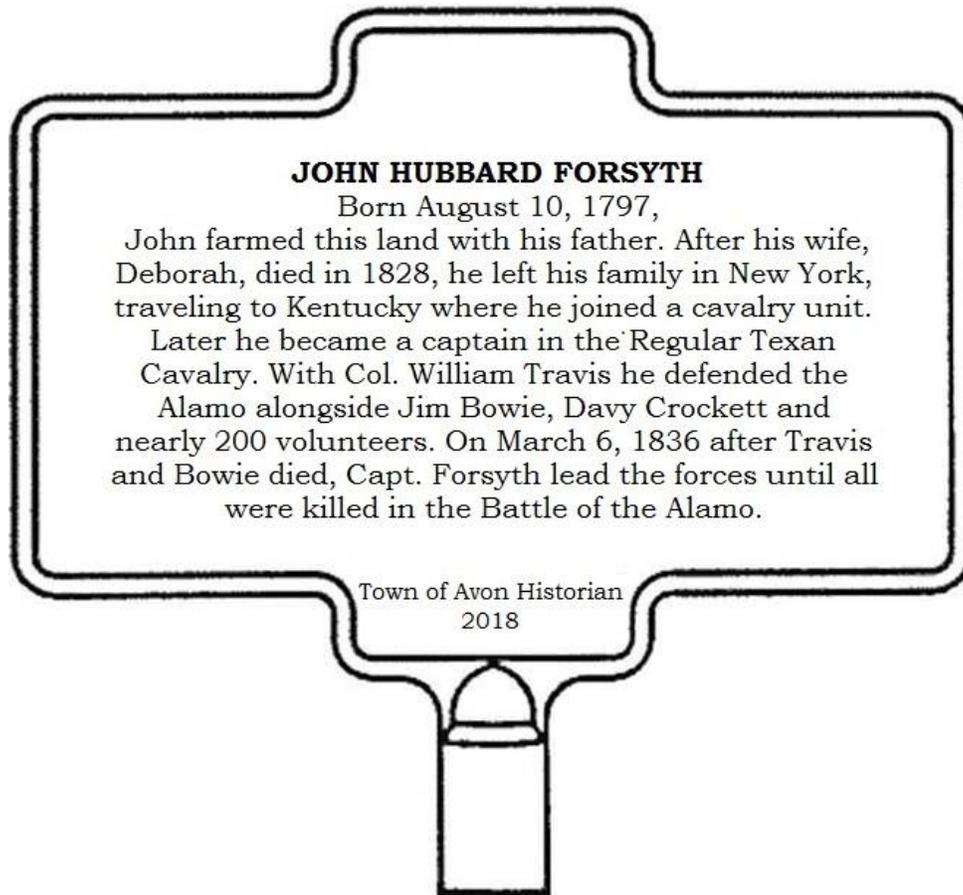


DEDICATION OF HISTORICAL MARKER FOR

JOHN HUBBARD FORSYTH (1797-1836)



THURSDAY, JULY 26, 2018

5:00PM

CORNER OF HENTY ROAD AND ROUTE 15, AVON, NY

PRESENTED BY MAUREEN KINGSTON AND HOLLY WATSON
TOWN OF AVON HISTORIANS

JOHN HUBBARD FORSYTH: HERO OF THE ALAMO

March 6, 1836 marked the bloody end of a 13-day siege during the Texas Revolution, a brutal fight for control of the territory that is now part of the State of Texas. Mexican troops, lead by dictator Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, fought to secure the Alamo Mission near present-day San Antonio, Texas, which was held by Texians. These white residents of Mexican Texas, and frontiersmen who voluntarily joined the conflict, collectively called Texians, defended their land. But on this memorable day, all the besieged Texians were killed by the Mexican Army. One the frontiersmen was a man called John Hubbard Forsyth, whose native land was faraway Avon, New York.

John Hubbard Forsyth was born to Alexander and Mercy (Treat) Forsyth on August 10, 1797, just after his parents arrived in Avon. His father was named in the 1796 list of those farmers who had chosen and recorded a mark for their cattle. Since there were many animals free ranging at that early time, it was important to be able to identify one's own. This indicates that the family was an early one in what is now the Town of Avon, New York. In a lease agreement with James Wadsworth of Geneseo, dated February 1, 1814, Alexander and Mercy Forsyth rented 40 acres of land in the east side of lot 102, near the Willowbrook, aka Little Conesus Creek. The name "Forsyth" is written in on old maps showing the lot.



Map of Avon, c. 1807. Source: Wadsworth Family Papers. Milne Library, SUNY Geneseo.

Rent was to be paid in farm produce, with the first due February 1, 1816. Certain conditions were also written into the agreement. These included the planting within two years of 40 apple trees, planted at equal distance in straight lines, crossing each other at right angles and at a distance of two rods from each other and enclosed with a good rail fence. Five acres were to be set aside as a wood lot. The lease was to expire April 1, 1847, when Daniel Albertson became the new leasee. Early assessment records of 1817, 1818, 1819 and 1820 state that Alexander Forsyth had real estate holdings of 130 acres in 1817 with a house and barn, and in 1820, 164 acres with a real estate and personal value of \$2170.

Alexander Forsyth's signature on a lease, dated 1814. Source: Wadsworth Family Papers. Milne Library, SUNY Geneseo.

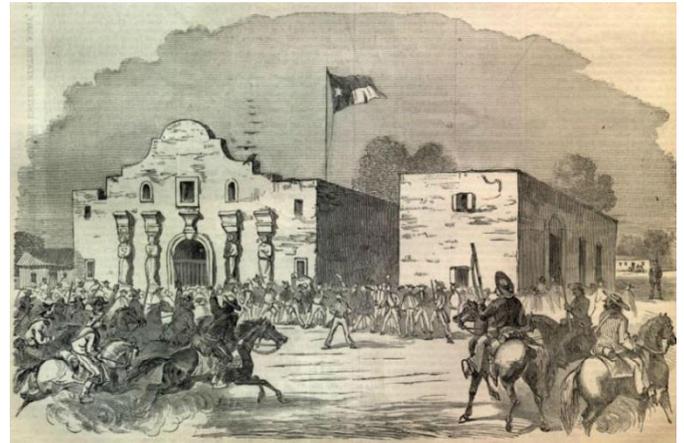
It was here that young John spent his early life before allegedly studying medicine for a time, though he probably never practiced.

Alexander married a second time after Mercy died in 1834 to a woman named Sabrina. She died in 1839 and both women are buried in the East Avon Cemetery. Alexander, likely having become too old to farm any longer by the early 1840s, moved to Rochester where he lived out the last of his years. He is buried in Mt. Hope Cemetery.

In 1822, young John Hubbard Forsyth married a woman named Deborah Smith, and East Avon Presbyterian Church records prove the births of two children to them. A son, Edmund Augustus, was baptized in 1823 and a daughter, Eliza Smith Forsyth, was baptized in 1826. Later accounts only mention their son, however, so it is unknown if Eliza survived.

Deborah apparently died on Christmas Day, 1828, and John was said to be so devastated that he left little Edmund with his father's family and traveled to Kentucky. There were other young men like him – they had suffered hardships in the northeast, or were simply longing for the opportunity the west promised. In Kentucky, Forsyth was said to join a volunteer cavalry group, eventually making the acquaintance of Col. William Travis. Forsyth had become a captain in the Regular Texan Cavalry and was therefore considered a professional soldier. Col. Travis desired to go to the aid of the Alamo and the fight for Texan independence from Mexico, but had very few volunteers. Hearing no response from the Governor concerning his call for more men, he eventually forged ahead to San Antonio with

a group of soldiers, including Capt. Forsyth, and arrived there in February of 1836. Jim Bowie, a frontiersman and folk hero, lead a motley group of volunteers, and Col. Davy Crockett, already a famous frontiersmen, joined in to great fanfare. The volunteers numbered only about 200, while the Mexican army reached nearly 2,000 troops.



The Alamo Mission. *Source: Google Images*

Early on March 5, 1836, after a siege that had exhausted the Texian volunteers, the Mexican troops advanced. They approached under a cloudy, dark sky and gained ground quickly. Col. Travis, who had led the forces, was one of the first to be killed in action. Jim Bowie, who was ill and confined to his bed, could not fight alongside the rest of the volunteers, and also met his end. As probable third-in-command, Capt. John Forsyth, a farmer's son from New York, was likely made leader of the remaining defenders of the Alamo. However, as the volunteers were poorly equipped and facing an army nearly ten times their number, all the defenders were killed that morning at the Alamo.

This bloody defeat galvanized a larger force against Santa Anna's army in April of 1836, however. This time, the battle's victory was awarded to the Americans, with a

decisive defeat of the remainder of Santa Anna's army, and both battles were crucial to the eventual independence of Texas from Mexico. Capt. John Hubbard Forsyth is often overlooked in histories of the Battle of the Alamo, but his bravery to the last minute will not be forgotten by Avon, his hometown.



Location of historical marker, Avon, NY

SPECIAL THANKS TO

**David LeFeber and members of
the Avon Town Council**

Thomas Crye, Highway Superintendent

Avon Town Historians

Maureen Kingston • Holly Watson

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