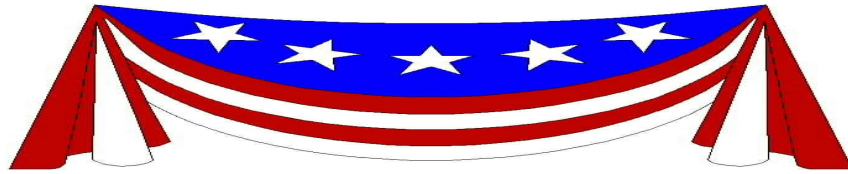


The West Michigan Compatriot Citizen



A Newsletter of the West Michigan Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution

March, 2009

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The Siege of Boston

As 1775 drew to a close, the friends of Congress were faced with a new difficulty. The American army was only a temporary army. They were only engaged to serve out until the end of the year. The object for which they had enlisted in the army for had not yet been accomplished. Every reason which had previously induced the provinces to embody a military force still existed. Therefore, it was resolved to form a new army. The same hopes were indulged, that an army for the next year would accomplish every objective. It was presumed that the spirit for which the men had enlisted for would induce most of the same individuals to enlist for another 12 months.

Very early in the contest, the King of Great Britain, by proclamation, forbade the exportation of warlike stores to the colonies. Great exertions had been made to manufacture saltpeter and gunpowder, but the supply was slow and inadequate. A secret committee of Congress had been appointed, with ample powers to lay in a stock of this necessary article. Some swift-sailing vessels had been dispatched to the coast of Africa to purchase what could be procured; a party from Charleston forcibly took about 17,000 pounds of gunpowder from a vessel near the bar of St. Augustine. Some time later, Commodore Hopkins stripped Providence, one of the Bahama Islands, of a number of artillery and stores; but the whole, procured from all these quarters, was far short of a sufficiency.

To break the stalemate of nerves that had developed in Boston between the British and the Colonies, Gen Washington devised a plan to sway the balance of power and misery. In mid-November he decided to fetch some of the captured weapons and cannons from Fort Ticonderoga overland to Boston. He figured with these cannons and munitions strategically placed around the heights of Boston, it may provide the necessary incentive for the British to evacuate the city. It had now become a very unnerving game of cat and mouse, with neither side carrying an advantage militarily to change the situation. This would be a grueling task carting the weapons by ox-drawn sledges down the Hudson Valley, and then over the steep, snowy Berkshire mountains during the winter months. The young 25 year old artillery officer, Henry Knox was chosen to head up the task.



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Meanwhile, the eastern colonies presented an unusual sight. The British army safely entrenched in their first city, while a British fleet was ready to transport them to any part of the coast. A large body of townspeople were bent on opposition to the British, but without the necessary weapons and ammunition for self-defense, they didn't have a chance. All eyes were fixed on Gen. George Washington, and from him, it was unreasonably expected that he would free Boston from the British troops. The dangerous situation

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of public affairs led him to conceal the real situation of the scarcity of arms and ammunition.

Washington stated to his officers that the troops in camp, together with the reinforcements which had been called for and those that were coming in daily, would amount to nearly 17,000 men, that he didn't have enough powder for a bombardment. he asked their advice whether, as reinforcements might be daily expected to the British army, it would not be wise to make an assault on the British lines. A proposition was recommended to take possession of Dorchester Heights. To conceal this plan and to divert the attention of the British garrison, a bombardment of the town from other directions started. This was continued for 3 days.

On March 4, the night was fixed upon for taking possession of Dorchester Heights. A covering party of about 800 men led the way. These were followed by the carts with the entrenching tools, and 1,200 men of a working-party, commanded by Gen. Thomas. In the rear there were more than 200 carts loaded with fascines and hay in bundles. While the cannon were playing in other parts, the greatest silence was kept by this working-party. The active zeal of the industrious provincials finished their defensive lines by morning. The difference between Dorchester Heights that evening and the morning of March 5 seemed to realize the tales of romance.

Gen. William Howe was told that if the Americans kept possession of these heights he would not be able to keep one of his majesty's ships in the harbor. It was determined in a council-of-war to attempt to dislodge them. An engagement was hourly expected. Washington intended to force his way into Boston with 4,000 soldiers, who were to have embarked at the mouth of Cambridge River. They had come forward with great alertness, each bringing 3 days' rations, in expectation of an immediate assault. The men were in high spirits and impatiently waiting for the appeal.

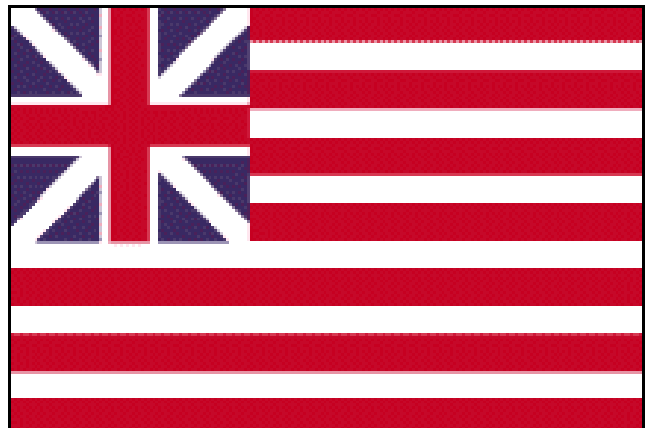
On March 5, they were called upon to avenge the deaths of their countrymen. Howe did not intend to attack until the next day. In order to be ready, the British transports came down that evening towards the castle. During the night, a violent storm moved in. Towards morning, the heavy of rain had come. It was agreed upon by the British, in a council-of-war, to evacuate Boston as soon as possible. Their delay had permitted Washington to strengthen his defenses, knowing that an assault was too dangerous to be attempted.

In a few days, after a flag of truce came out of Boston, with a paper signed by 4 selectmen, informing, "that they had applied to Gen. Robertson, who, on an application to Howe, was authorized to assure them that he had no intention of burning the town, unless the troops under his command were molested during their embarkation, or at their departure, by the armed force without." When this paper was presented to Washington, he replied, "that as it was an unauthenticated paper, and without an address, and not obligatory on Howe, he could take no notice of it;" but at the same time intimated his good wishes for the security of the town.

The British, amounting to more than 7,000 men, evacuated Boston, leaving their barracks standing, and also a number of cannon spiked, 4 large iron seamortars, and stores to the value of 30,000 pounds. They demolished the castle, and knocked off the trunnions of the cannon. Various incidents caused a delay of 9 days after the evacuation, before they left Nantasket Road.

When the British navy and army left Boston, several ships were left behind for the protection of ships coming from England. The American privateers were so alert that they nevertheless made many prizes. Some of the British ships which they captured were loaded with firearms and military stores. Some transports, with British troops on board, were also taken. These had run into the harbor, not knowing that Boston had been evacuated.

The boats employed in the embarkation of the British troops had scarcely completed their business when Washington, with his army, marched into Boston. On the eighteenth, the commander in chief quietly entered Boston. Characteristically, he made no dramatic speech or gesture in taking over the city. When he attended divine worship, the first to be held here under the new flag of the Colonies – thirteen red and white stripes with the Union Jack in the canton – he asked Dr. Eliot, dean of the Boston clergy, to preach a sermon of devout thanksgiving, not of war. Dr. Eliot found his text in Isaiah, and George Washington of Virginia bowed his head to the words, "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down."



Patriot Ancestors of WMCSAR

Editor's Note: This article is part of a series of articles on the WMCSAR member's patriot ancestors. We hope to feature a patriot ancestor each month.

Hains was born the 4th and last child of John French IV and Olive (Anna) Haynes in 1761, at Mendon, MA. The John French family removed from Massachusetts and settled in Columbia Town, Coos County, NH. While his father served with the Green Mountain Boys, Hains service in the American Revolution primarily concerns his involvement with the Whitcomb Rangers. Whitcomb's Rangers functioned primarily as scouts and spies. Small groups of up to six men traveled behind British lines for days or weeks at a time. Several times, British intelligence reported them going into Canada dressed as Canadians or Indians. The Unit, augmented by another ranger company under Captain Thomas Lee and volunteers from other companies also went out in pursuit of Indian and Loyalist raiding and scouting parties. On June 17, 1777, men of Whitcomb's Corps fought the first action of Burgoyne's campaign when Indians functioning as a screen for the advancing British army ambushed fourteen Rangers on a scouting mission. Subsequently, some of the Rangers took part in the actions of Hubbardton, Fort Anne, Bennington, and Saratoga (where they fought as part of Dearborne's light infantry). Several of the Rangers also took part in Brown's raid on the British and the Germans garrisoning the Ticonderoga/Mount Independence complex in the fall of 1777.

After the surrender of Burgoyne, Whitcomb received orders to serve as major in a regiment organized for an incursion into Canada under Lafayette. In early 1778, as part of those plans, the corps moved to Rutland, Vermont, where they built Fort Ranger which ultimately became the military headquarters for the Republic of Vermont. That fall, Whitcomb's Rangers played a significant role in detecting and limiting the success of a "secret" British expedition to burn mills and sources of supplies in the Champlain valley. The Rangers had known of the impending raid for several weeks. During the winter of 1778-79, Whitcomb's Rangers moved to the upper Connecticut River valley, then known as "Co'os," and set up headquarters in Haverhill, NH. As well as continuing to scout into Canada, the corps guarded the men working on the Bayley-Hazen Road which had been started with the intention of serving as the route for the second invasion of Canada. Much of the responsibility of protecting the region fell to Whitcomb Rangers and companies of men raised just for the summer months. In October of 1780, the British and their allied Indians attempted a raid on Co'os in order to destroy any war-making capabilities of the region. A few miles before they reached Co'os, a spy reported that Whitcomb had 500 men with him and the raiders decided to turn south and attack the White River valley instead. The area around Royalton, Vermont, suffered severely and the raid became a legendary piece of Vermont's history.

Whitcomb's Rangers carried on their service until the army's reorganization in early 1781. At that time, the officers retired and the enlisted men joined the light infantry companies of the three New Hampshire regiments with the main army.

The War of 1812 found a now aging and feeble Major Hains French once again serving his country as major of the 31st Regiment U S Infantry. No arguments could overcome the loyalty and the observance of what he viewed a duty he owed to his country. With him, nearly the same time, enlisted his three sons, Homer, John, and Ovid, the last being only 17 years of age. Homer French was killed at the Battle of Chipewa while storming a battery, 17 September 1814. The other two sons John and Ovid served out their terms during the war.

Compatriot: John C. Carlson

Patriot Ancestor: Hains Daniel French

Rank: Militiaman

Service: Whitcomb Rangers

Time of Service: 1777-1781



Calling all Compatriots!!

We are currently assembling biographical information on all of WMCSAR's patriot ancestors. Please submit your information to Compatriot Lensworth Cottrell for inclusion in our monthly newsletter, and eventually a booklet of all biographies.

Revolutionary War Trivia

According to historical tradition, on March 15, 1781, a single American at Guilford Courthouse killed eleven British with his five-foot sword. Who was this man?

Important Chapter Dates

Mar. 21	State BOM Meeting
Apr. 11	Chapter Balloting Meeting
May 9	Chapter Meeting
June 13	Chapter Meeting

Important March Dates In the Revolution

Mar 22, 1765	England enacts the Stamp Act
Mar 17, 1776	British evacuate Boston
Mar 3, 1778	British General William Howe replaced by Henry Clinton
Mar 2, 1781	Articles of Confederation adopted
Mar 15, 1781	Battle at Guilford Courthouse

This Month's Meeting

This month's meeting will be a Board of Manager's Meeting. **All compatriots are invited to attend.** Last month's BOM meeting was postponed due to inclement weather.

Speaking at this meeting will be Dr. Robert Schoone-Jongen, professor of history at Calvin College. He was originally scheduled to speak at February's meeting. Please see last month's *Compatriot Citizen* for a more information on Dr. Schoone-Jongen.

April's Meeting

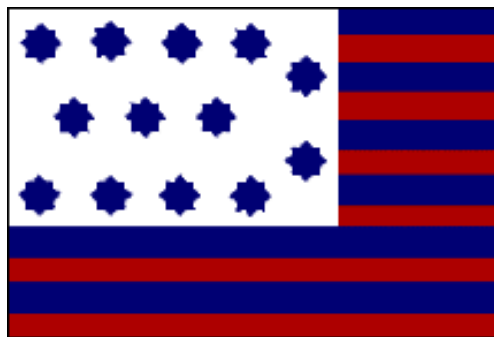
April's Meeting will be our annual business meeting with balloting on next year's officers.



Revolutionary War Trivia Answer

Peter Francisco killed the British with a sword that Washington had ordered made for him. Francisco was 6 foot, 8 inches tall and weighed 260 pounds. He was believed to have been the strongest man in both the American and British armies. He was found lying among the dead on the battlefield, but recovered to fight again. In another fight in Virginia, he was surrounded by nine of Tarleton's dragoons and fought his way clear after killing two of them.

Flags of the Revolution Guilford Courthouse



This flag is an example of the lack of uniformity in American flags during the Revolutionary period as each group chose what flag to be used as it's standard. This flag has the unique elements of an elongated canton and blue stripes. It was raised over the Guilford

Courthouse, North Carolina on March 15, 1781 under the leadership of General Greene whose militiamen halted the British advance through the Carolinas and turned them back to the seaport towns. This was one of the bloodiest battles of the long war with the British losing over a quarter of their troops.