

The Diary of
JAMES STEVENS
Revolutionary Soldier

The Life and Character of James Stevens, for fifty-seven years a prominent citizen of Jaffrey, with excerpts from the Journal of his Revolutionary service during the years 1775 and 1776

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Committee on Jaffrey History

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AMES STEVENS, one of the most useful and substantial of our early citizens, was born and raised on a farm in Andover, Mass. When he attained his majority he learned the trade of housewright and joiner with his uncle John Peabody of the same town, and gifted with unusual skill and an obliging nature he was a handy man wherever he found himself.

In January, 1777, he bought of Daniel Davis the west part of the former minister lot in Jaffrey, that had been the residence of Moses Stickney in Rowley Canada days and later was a bone of contention between John Grout and the settlers of Monadnock No. 2. This place, a part of the original lot number twelve in the ninth range of lots, is now the farm of George O. Turner, whose wife was a descendant of James Stevens; and the first house on the premises was located just west of the present dwelling.

James Stevens made no pretension to literary gifts, but he left to posterity a journal of his experience as a soldier of the Revolution, that has been published in the Essex Institute Historical Collections, Salem, Mass., Vol. 48, and is of priceless value for the intimate picture it affords of the every day life of the times. His spelling, even for the days when spelling had not been reduced to rule, is evidence of a marvelous versatility, that stood him well in the various occupations of his life. He was not by temperament or choice a soldier. His military service was performed as a duty of responsible citizenship. He was trained in the old New England orthodoxy, and felt himself deprived of one of the greatest privileges of life if he might not attend church on the Sabbath. He noted in his diary the text from which the sermon was drawn, and no doubt found daily food for thought in the truths presented.

For a hundred years his ancestors in the older towns of Massachusetts had been struggling for the homes and the measure of liberty they now possessed and they did not propose to give up any of their rights to the arbitrary encroachments of a tyrannical government across the seas. As the troublous days drew on when friction between the Mother Country and the Colonies was to result in active hostilities, he joined, in January, 1775, the company of Minute-men in Andover, commanded by Capt. Thomas Poor; and upon the Lexington alarm his company was a part of the host that gathered in Cambridge from the entire region within striking distance from Boston. It was to him a novel experience, but he seems not to have been swept off his feet by the excitement of the times.

Word came to Andover on the 19th of April, 1775, that the British forces were marching toward Concord where the Colony munitions were stored. If the Colonists allowed their military stores to be captured and themselves to be disarmed, they would be powerless against any tyranny that the Mother Country might impose upon them. The Andover men were a bit late at the scene of action but were in season to see along the road the untouched aftermath of the battle. Of these historic events, the most exciting by far in his uneventful life, we have from day to day a matter of fact account, which shows how little he realized the importance of events

in which he bore a part; and how every detail of those historic days would be treasured by succeeding generations.

Let him tell of one of the greatest days in American History: "April ye 19, 1775 this morning about seven a clock we had alarum that the Reegerlers was gon to Conkerd we gethered to the meting hous & then started for Concord we went throu Tukesbary & in to Bilrica we stopt to Polderds & eat som biskit & Ches on the Comon we started & wen into Bedford & we herd that the regerlers was gon back to Boston we went through Bedford we went in to Lecentown (Lexington) We went to the Metinghous & there we come to the distruction of the Reegerlers they cild eight of our men & shot a Canon Ball throug the Meting hous, we went a long through Lecintown & we saw several regerlers ded on the rod & som of our men & three or fore housen was Burnt & Som hoses & hogs was cild they plundered in every hous they could get in to they stove in windows & broke in tops of desks we met the men a Coming back very fast. We went through Notemy (Menotomy, now Arlington) & got into Cambridg we stopt about eight a cloke for they say that the regelers was got to Chalstown on to Bunkers hil & intrenstion we stopt about two miles back from the College."

The next day was of almost equal interest—there was an alarm in the morning, the firing of guns was heard, and an attack by the regulars was momentarily expected. He says, "Thursday ye 20 this morning we had alarum about day we imbodyed as son as posable & Marcht into the Comon we herd that the regelers was gon to Boston we staid on the Comon a spel & then retretd back to the hils & expected them out on us we herd several small Canons & one or two swevels from a tender we staid while ten or a leven aClok & then come down & got some refreshment & Men come in very fast."

We know who some of those men were who "come in very fast." Fifty-four of them left Rindge Common in the middle of the night before. A dozen from Jaffrey followed as soon as they received the alarm. There were ninety-eight from New Ipswich and sixty-five from Peterborough. In some towns not an able-bodied man was left at home. The roads were full of Minute-men with every sort of makeshift for arms and equipment, and all that day "they come in very fast." It was a day of breathless excitement with drums beating, fifes shrilling and bells ringing everywhere. All the way from Andover to Concord and in other directions, as one account has it, "the roads were filled with frightened women and children, some in carts with their tattered furniture, others on foot, fleeing to the woods. But what added most to the horror of the scene was the sight of mangled bodies strewn along the road through Concord and Arlington.

James Stevens saw all this, but he indulged in no flights of rhetoric; it was what he expected, "for things like this you know must be after every famous victory." He has nothing to say against the authors of the mischief; they were just "the regerlers."

After a few days of excitement many returned to their homes to finish the plowing they had started and it looked for a time as though it might not not be much of a war after all. Others remained and were formed into new military units with a definite period of enlistment. It was a task for

military authority to bring into some semblance of order and discipline this irregular horde of rough-and-ready sons of liberty, and after a fashion it was done. They "praded" morning and night and sometimes all day.

James Stevens staid with the army and was a useful man in the months that followed. He went to meeting on Sunday, generally twice, and it was a deprivation to be noted and excused in his diary when military necessity held him elsewhere.

"Satterday ye 22" was "loury wether;" but led by healthy curiosity, he went to the Neck "tords Charlestown" to observe the state of war, and, later, "sun about an our hy," he "praded."

Sunday he went to "meeting & herd a sermon from Mathews C5 7v."

Then came a day of hard service when his company "went on to preade very arly & preaded al day," and at night "was sot on gard & then went hom & got our super & then went on gard & staid all night." Next morning after "Brecfast" he again "went on gard & staid all day."

From the twenty-fifth of April onward the camp gradually settled to a more regular routine, with daily parade and guard duty but "nothing haping extrorderny." On Sunday he was again at "Meting & herd one Mr. Emson from the 20 of job & 5 vers & there were three regrelers bured."

One day the "egins" (Indians) burnt the image of "Gagers had" (General Gage's head) on the Common. Another event worthy of note was when, from Andover, "Steven Barker come down & brought us some sas" (garden sass—vegetables a welcome variety to their monotonous camp diet.) "Nothing hapened remacble" that day, and at night he watched with Asa Osgood, a sick comrade.

The next Sunday morning he was again at meeting and heard President Langdon of Harvard College "prech from Mathew the 10 C & 28 Vers in the afternune I went about a mile & a half back tords home & herd a sermon from Numbers the 1 d & 13 vers." No excitement of camp or field could detract from his interest in the church ministrations on the Sabbath, or make him forget his duty of regular attendance. Considerable liberty seems to have been allowed these raw recruits, and it was not often abused. One day, without avail, they dragged a pond for guns that the "regelers" we fear with intent to deceive said they had thrown therein. They then went fishing with equally barren results and, finally, to end the day, they "praded." James summarizes this busy day by saying that "nothing hapened extrordenary."

One morning, he says, "three or four of us went down to Charleston to se the regelers in trenshines against the fere way there lay a slup against the fery way we got home two or three aclok & Went on preade while night."

The soldiers, who considered themselves in every way as good as their officers, did not fail to assert their rights or express their opinion in regard to discipline and camp management. Like a Central American Revolutionary army, they were all generals. The following is no doubt, a moderate statement of what occurred when Capt. Poor of the Andover Company gave them a lecture upon their unwarranted assumption of authority—"Capt. Poor came and spoke out very rash concerning our chusing a sargent & said that we had no right to which displesed the soldiers very much

they went of & did no duty that day about leven a Clok we praded & capt. Poor come & said that he was mis understood & the Compiny setled with him by his making som recantation."

Fast Day happily furnished another opportunity for meeting, and our soldier "herd Mr Adams preach from Psams." In the afternoon he stayed at home to "cuk."

Again on Sunday, twice to meeting, once to hear a man preach from "26 of Isah 11 vers" and again in the afternoon to hear a sermon by the President of Harvard College.

One day he stood guard four times; and "a soldier died a stranger to me." The next day, after "gard," he went "to Watertown to se the Canon & Boms;" came back and "preaded & then went to here prares."

Saturday the 27th of May was one of unusual excitement; "this morning I was Cald on feteg we went & worked in the forenune we Come hom to diner & there was a perty agoing of sumer but where I cant tel we got redy to go & there Com a expres that the regerlers was a landing some said at Miskit but we marcht very fast we got dow(n) within a quarter of a mile of the fery & then halted & our ofisers went to louk out to place the canon they went round by the water while they come in sight of the sconer when as son as the regerlers saw our men thay fired on them then the firing Begun on boath sides & fired very worm there came a man & ordered us over a nol rit into the mouths of the canon we got on to the top of the nol & the grap shot & Canon bauls Com so thik that we retretd back to the roade & then marcht down to the fery the regerlers shouted very much our men got the canon & plast them & gave them two or three gun sids and the firing set in so(me) masure & there was a terrable cry a Monst the regerlers they fired wanc & a wile all night about ten a Clok the sconer run on to the wais and stuck fast there came a slup for her relief they left the sconer." (This was the so-called battle of Chelsea, brought about by the rescue of live stock that had been seized by the British.)

The excitement continued into the following morning which was Sunday, when "about day they come with thare barges to bord the sconer Curnul putnam Com & ordered us down to the whoife & we fired so that they retretd back to the sloup our men run down & fired the sconer & it burnt very fast the slup begun to go of in about three quarters of a our after it was sot on fire the magersene Blod up & blod out some plunder thay fired from Nodles oiland on us sun about an our hy we retretd back to our packs & gout our Brekfast the slups drad of to Boston. There was of our men wounded fore & non cild after the fire was got down the men went & got out the plunder out of the reck (wreck) in the afternune there come down about fore hundred men to relieve us & there wos of us about a hundred & twenty men of us tords night thay got tems & cared a lode of to Cambridge we Staid all night."

But after the storm was calm.

Monday they got some more plunder from the wreck, staid through the early afternoon and got back to Cambridge about dusk being very much "fetiged."

There were reports of our men taking "a number of ships and hoses and

som catl," and there was alarming news from Salem where some British vessels had appeared. Then came days when "nothing haping remarca-bel," except "som men come down from Andover" with home news; and there began to be sickness and frequent funerals in camp.

"Saturday ye 3 this morning I did not fel well this afternune there was two whipt & won drumd out of the regiment the scout that went to Chelsy tuk a Barge & four men of warsmen about three hundre sheep & catl."

Busy days followed. There was a march to Charlestown, under Col. Putnam to exchange prisoners, "seven regerlers" and "won regerlers leftenant" for "nine of our men." Then a day off "for fishen in a pond tords watertown," returning for parade and a funeral toward night.

He "stood gard" often; and "cukt for our two meses." They were at this time quartered in houses at Cambridge and it was a serious blow to their comfort when they were ordered out of their apartment "for the Adgent wanted the Chamber." The next day, prayers in the morning, preaching in the afternoon, and then peremptory orders from "Agetent Stevens" to vacate their room for the good and sufficient reason that "he said he wanted it." And so our heroes uncomplainingly "moved up garet." The next day they hunted without success for a room. He "praded but felt poorly" and continued unwell for three days following. Then he says, "the age-tent gave me a pas to go hom for I was not abel to do my duty I went up to ferinton & there I had his hors & his wife went with me hom & Jonathan gardner we got hom about ten a clok I staid at Brothers all night." In the morning he went to "doctor osgood" who prescribed an emetic, or, in the good Anglo Saxon speech of the patient: "he gave me a puk I went hom & in the afternune I tuk it." This was on the eve of Bunker Hill. But our James whose equanimity was not to be upset by the wreck of matter and crash of worlds, attended to his medicine and went calmly about his every-day affairs. On the morning of "Saturday ye 17, when the British war ships were shelling Bunker Hill and Jaffrey folks were raising their meeting-house he heard some news that was surely not exaggerated. "I went after my hors up to felses I herd that our men was gon on to bunkers hil to intrench & that they shot won of our men won Polerd of Bilrica we saw a lit tords Charlston."

"Sunday ye 18 this morning I went to doctor ozood & there was alarum thay sad that the regerlers had com out & we here that our men was gon on to bunkers hil to intrench & that the regerlers was Com over & Cild a hundred of our men & wounded a great many more in the afternune I went to Boxford meting after Meting I went to town to se what nus the men was a coming back."

Tidings of the battle, it appears, were not long in reaching Andover, but it was not until after meeting that he went to town "to see what nus the men was a coming back." Stories were flying everywhere; the sound of the guns was heard in surrounding towns, and necessarily in Andover, all day Saturday and all day Sunday. He himself had narrowly escaped being in the fray, but in the quiet fields the battle echoes sounded to him far away, and on Monday he went placidly "to uncal (John) to lod a lod of Bark &

then put a botom into a bred trof at night I went to town,"—presumably for "nus."

The next day he went to call on Capt. Benjamin Varnum who was home from the fight with two wounds in his leg. Evidently now recovered from his indisposition he staid around home another day, and was usefully employed in bottoming another "bred trof." In the evening in neighborly fashion he went to Amos Stevens' "to se him." The next day he called on another wounded man, Timothy Carlton, who was wounded in the knee, after which he set off about nine o'clock for the seat of war and arrived in Cambridge about sunset. This was a foot journey of about twenty-five miles, but even though it brought him to the scene of the greatest battle fought in America to that time he offers no comment and gives us no "nus." In the following days there was a constant succession of alarms but, as he would have said, "nothing haping extrorderny." One day he visited the battle field at Bunker Hill. It was a day of freedom from "pread" and camp duties and as the torn manuscript reveals, "I went on to the (hill) to se the regelers an to se wh(torn) our men did on the (torn.)" The next day he made a couch for Major Poor and he notes the death of James Binton from wounds that he received in the fight at Charlestown.

There was occasional insubordination and rough-and-ready punishment was speedily administered, as when "there was two whipt & won rid the woden hors." After these ceremonies of the morning, he "went on gard at the Canon there was a fine shower there was come down John Tiler & Zacheriah Chikrin from Andover." A day more eventful than inspiring.

The next day was one of mixed interest and disappointment. "Saterdag July 1 I was relieved of a gard about nine a Clok I went on to Chil to see the fort there was won funeral we preaded to receive the new jeneral Washington but he did not Com."

The new general came the next morning, July 2, but it was Sunday and no time for military pomp or dress parade; and, besides, it rained. He seems to have thought only of having the business over and getting to meeting. Not a word about the reception under the old Washington Elm; and no prophetic vision of the far reaching event. He saw no heroic figure; the Commander-in-chief was only the "new jeneral." "The new jeneral com in about nune there was no meeting in the afternune I went to the Colidg (Harvard) & herd a Sarmon from Psams the 71 in the morning there was firing from roxbry the regelers burnt won hous our men fired on them three times." Thus passed unfelt and almost unrecognized by those immediately concerned a memorable event in American history.

The next day "Munday ye 3 nothing happing extroderly we preaded three times I went up on the hil."

"Tusday ye 4" was a red letter day for the Andover boys; that must have far surpassed the reception of the new general, for, as the record runs, "this morning we preaded very arly & went to her (hear) prars afternune Mr Stephen Barker & his wife Sarah & Major poor wife & Jonathan Stevens wife & Phinehas Johnsons wife thay all Com down." No doubt there was a general sprucing up of the Andover quarters in order to pass muster before these expert housekeepers, who would not fail to speak their minds; but

best of all, there would be welcome news of the home folks such as they had not heard for many a day. This was the Fourth of July, "Mr. Barker and his Compiny went home with him" and they never dreamed that their quiet picnic was the harbinger of the natal day of a great nation that should be celebrated forever after "with bonfires and illuminations."

The Bradford Company that had been on furlough "Come down agin in the afternune there was won (Daniel) Griffin drouned Blongin to haverhil a going in swimmin tord night I went to the hil with Dudley Carlton." There was an attraction about "the hil," perhaps not of a military nature; but in the absence of specifications by diarist or historian, we must assume that only their interest in the progress of the entrenchments, or military works, drew them so often thither.

On Saturday the 8th in the early morning "Came alarum about three a clok we were under arms about three ours we was disarmed we preaded in the afternune we moved to the Colej."

The following week seems to have been one of special religious services, for every day except one the diarist records that "we preaded and went to prars." On Sunday two sermons were enjoyed and texts recorded. It was a "very blustrin" day and "James Ingalls of Methuen was burid he died of wounds that he recived at the fight." One day Stevens made a chest, another day he noted the arrival of five and twenty prisoners from "Mechios" (Machias?)—presumably naval captives,—and fifteen from "Long oiland." Again it was an item of home news: "Jonathan gardner Com from Andover & told me that Cor osgood was ded."

On Friday, July 14, with no sense of incongruity, he records, "this morning we preaded & herd prars & I made a tab(l)e for a grog shop in the afternune I herd of my gun & it was sold for five dolors I went to the Comity of Safty & got won of them to go with me & I got the gun."

"Saturday 15 this morning we preaded for Prars nothing extrorderly hapend this day in the afternune we praded after prars there was a pece red that the Continental Congress put out." (The "pece" was perhaps the Declaration of Independence; or the Declaration of Causes adopted at Philadelphia, July 6, 1775.)

"Munday 17," prayers and the usual routine, and the disquieting news that "there was two cared out of Coleg" with the small pox. There was a fine show in the afternoon and the post was reported in from London. He hears also "there was a number of men was inlisted to (go) a boting." Privateers were being fitted out and the spirit of adventure and promise of profit from rich prizes drew many from the monotony of the land service. By intercepting supply ships from England these privateers proved very useful to the Colonists and correspondingly disastrous to the British army of occupation.

"Wednesday ye 19 this morning we was praded a three a Clok there was three hundred of our men went to the hil to the hemsher men (N. H.) to intrench with them." This work was evidently the entrenchment on Dorchester Heights which aided in eventually forcing the evacuation of Boston.

One night "we was dissmist after prars about aleven a Clok we was ordered to get up & dress our selves for they expect alarum before morning

we laid down with our Clos on. This was a Saturday night. We was preaded about half after two in the morning we was dismist before sunrise we went hom & staid about an our & a half & then was preaded for prars."

A wearisome service is here recorded as an everyday matter, and it is no wonder that having been "preaded" again the following morning at "two a Clok" and "dismist before prars" he "went hom & tuk a nap." Unfortunately he overslept and arrived at meeting—for it was Sunday—"so late that I could not here the text." In the afternoon he was in better season: "& I herd a sarmon from galatians the 5 Chapter & the 7 8 verses it clouded up & it rained som." One day he writes that "there wos a hundred of jeneral washingtons men Com in." They were Riflemen from Philadelphia, one hundred and six in number.

On July 26 he was again assigned to an occupation in which he was employed off and on for many days. He "cukt." "I got for brekfast som bef staks & for diner I got a ris puden & bef & turnips at night there was won regerler deserted from them to us." Perhaps a whiff of the attractive menu had escaped to the other side.

On "Sunday ye 30" he hears of the new Riflemen from Philadelphia in action; they "went down to the regerlers gard to Charlestown last night & they cild fore & brot of two there was non mising of the rifle men." But all this excitement did not prevent his going to Number two and hearing a sermon. That night they "wos alarumed about twelve a Clok we went up to the fort number two & we staid while sunrise & then we wos dismist we herd a firing wons & a while thay burnt a hous at roxbary in the afternune Jonathan Roberson & Nathan Swan & I went down to se the regerlers we went down & there wos a flag of truce Com of bunker hil & they would not let us fire on them."

His next adventure was a march to "worster" as one of a guard for a party of prisoners consisting of twenty-two regulars and twelve tory carpenters and workmen. It was a three days' march. On the morning of the third day they got a "draw" (dram) & then set of we marcht to Shusbary & there went to brekfast & we started and went to worster we marcht through the town the toris went with their hats under their arms & we returned them to the prison the toris went into the dungen we got som vitls & then sot of for hom we went to susbary we staid all night."

So the summer and autumn wore away with many alarums but little fighting. In the patriot camp there were frequent breaches of discipline; and yet, for the service demanded, a more effective army could hardly be imagined. They were inured to hard physical labor and often worked uncomplainingly night and day, in entrenching and fortifying the hills around the city. Against them, penned in the town, was a large British force of trained troops under competent command, but to break through the lines and ravage the country would be futile, as they would again be subjected to the irregular warfare they had found so disastrous at Lexington and Concord. So day by day they saw the cordon tighten around them until their only source of supplies and hope of relief was through the precarious support of the British navy and merchant ships from across the sea.

After his return from Worcester, James Stevens, who could turn his hand to anything, was transferred to the "horspittal" to take care of the sick; particularly of Enoch Parker of Andover, who "was sick so bad he could not go hom." He "drad," day by day, the Doctor's "perverins" and "staid at the horspittal & tuk care of the sick."

An event of one day was the stealing "a quarter of mutin out of a butchers cart." The culprit was caught and released "by Paing for the mutin & bol punch & was bloted hom into the Coleg," which would indicate that it was a prank of a mischievous student. But wherever he was, James Stevens, with true Yankee thrift, never missed an opportunity for turning an honest "doler" in the way of trade. One day he sold his "Blancit" for "two dolers;" and he often found means of handling at a profit "a barel of sider" supplied by an Andover neighbor.

Enoch Parker grew better and his father came down and took him home. There was fighting around "ploud hil" and two "rode oiland" men "cild." There was trouble at "Chelsy" and they "shot one of the rifle men leg of."

The "regerlers" were manifestly uneasy and they "fired" Bums al day & all night wons & a while."

Again it was "loury wether," and relieved of his hospital duties, he "cukt." There were days of "preading" and "gard," and one day, as handy man of the Company he was called on to go "to work to make lieut Johnson a feld bedst." The next day, "Saturday ye 9 I finisht Lieut Johnsons Bedsted & preaded in the afternune."

Sunday after "meting I was worned on gard down to ploud hil we went on a scout dow(n) within gunshot of the Regelers there was won rifle man deserted to the regelers our men shot after him wons or twice." At frequent intervals, there was a friendly face from Andover, as when "jed Holt Com down with a lode of spruse."

"Wednesday Sept 13 this day there was som People Com to se me from Coas Corl Baly two sons Tords nit there was a party of men set of for Canaday." This was the ill-fated expedition against Quebec, commanded by Benedict Arnold. In the party was John Dole of Jaffrey.

A whole day off, and a chance to go where they pleased was something to make the most of regardless of cost. "Friday Sept the 15 this morning we started of to go to Reeding Benjamin Parker, Phinehas Parker, Jonathan Roberson Ephraim Lasy & I set of we went as far as Mistik & then we hired two shas & three horses we rode as far as waltons in redin & bought som tuls & then went as fur as won harts horns Beyond the Meting hous we stopt at a tavern about halfway between redin & Mistick we got hom about nin a Cloke."

As the fall advanced they were fired on daily by the Regulars, but very little harm was done. He "cukt for Jonathan Roberson & helpt Draw the pervision in the afternune our Regement Praded I went & Drad the Bred for the Compiny & Divided it."

"Tusday Sept the 26 this morning I was relieved of a gard Linsy got a furlow & went hom at night Johnson fry Com down I went & got a furlow to go hom." The next morning "I (took) frys hors & set of for hom I went to

Balards & oted I set of & got to Mrs frys a Bout the midle of the afternune & then walked hom."

He was always an optimist; he did not expect to see the sun of liberty set in blood or the fruits of his labor destroyed. He cared more for "tuls" than for arms and he looked forward to building houses when the war was over. So on his first day at home he "went up to Town to By Som tuls But could not find any in town I went to mothers." The next morning he was off to "Haverhil & Laid out twenty Shillings in tuls & Bought won Lok wich was nine Shillings in the afternune I went to jos Houeys & got him to set a saw & I work for him the whilst." On the same day he went to see Enoch Parker, his former camp friend and hospital patient, and found him "Som Beter."

On the next day of his furlough, with filial duty, he "made a apel Chest for granfarther." Sunday to meeting and Monday he made a holiday by staying at home and whetting those new tools, as happy, no doubt, as a small girl with a new family of dolls. As he puts it: "I Staid at hom & fixt my tuls just at night I went Mr Barkers & Bout a Chas (chaise)." Did he bring this "Chas" to Jaffrey when he moved the next year? If so, his title is clear as a man of progress; and owner of the first "two wheeled shay" in our town.

Tuesday he returned to duty and Uncle John and Stephen Coburn went with him to see the sights of camp and town. They "went to gouns & oted and got down about son two ours hy we went round on the Lins." The next day he and Uncle went to "Roxbary to se the works."

Having given Uncle John a good time, he joined the carpenter's crew, and the next day with his new tools "Went to work on the floting Batry." From now on he was for some time employed as a carpenter "on the Baruks Before the Coleg & danil peabody was our master workman." Cold weather was coming on and as a military necessity work on the barracks must be rushed. And so on the next Sunday, he records, with scarcely concealed reluctance and misgiving: "This day I was Bliged to worke on the Baruks."

He "fixt an old Barn" for military occupancy and began a "nue frame" in a quiet interval when "nothing haping extrorderly." Then one day, with disastrous consequences, they tested the floating battery on which he had lately worked. He "herd the floting Batry had bin down tords Boston & fired on Boston & split won of the Canon & Cild won man & wounded Eight more."

He was now shifted from carpenter work to cook for a mess in Capt. Pollard's Company. A case of mild discipline and good riddance was recorded when "We Drumbed out won Haket out of our Chamber." The camp seems to have been generally well supplied with the produce of the surrounding country, and was, we hasten to assert, never reduced to such dire straits as the following entry would imply. "Wednesday Octo the 25 this day Cukt the man that was wounded a bord the floting Batry the man Belong to Marblehed."

The next Sunday he went "to winter hil & herd uncle Stephen preach." Uncle Stephen was the Rev. Stephen Peabody, a distinguished divine, for a time Chaplain of Col. Poor's regiment at Winter Hill.

He was always good at need; and in the days following he was again transferred to the hospital. There was daily firing by the enemy and some casualties were reported, but to the surprise of all, no movement in force upon the constantly growing patriot works. One day the regulars landed at Lechmere's Point and "tuke some Cows & wounded three of our men won mortly wounded."

Again Stevens worked on the barracks before the College; then he "went hunting out som sils for a Nother Baruk a hundred & Eight fot Long & got them to gether." It grew very cold; they "framed of won side & part of tother." The next day they finished the frame and to celebrate the event "jest at night we Drad a Baril of Sider."

One cold night in November they "had a Lerum a bout Nine a Clok we herd the Regerlers wos a Landing at Leachmors point But it was nothing only the Sentry wor (s) cart at the Cracing of the ice."

All through November in cold and rain he worked upon the barracks near the College, but Thursday November 23 was a day of blessed relief. It was Thanksgiving Day, a typical one it seems, for the day before they "had a lil snow about twø inshes deep." In spite of this wintry threat the carpenters were not asked to work on Thanksgiving, and even the men who went to work on Cobble Hill, where a fort was being built, "com of a Cobil hil jest at the Don of Day." "I went and herd a sarmon at night we had a fine super." Thus closes the record of Thanksgiving Day, 1775. It was such fine fellows as these who could work all night with pick and shovel in rain and snow and be fit for military duty the next day, who proved invincible before the trained soldiers of Europe.

The next Sunday was a day of labor, under the rule of military necessity; "it snod som we Workt on the gard hous but it stormed so that we left of a fore night." The end of the month was happily celebrated when "Jonathan Ober Com down & we drad a beril of sider."

Friday, December 8, "the milishy Com Down from Andover seventy-five men." The militia had been called to fill the places of companies whose term of enlistment was expiring, and Sunday morning Capt. Pollard informed his Company that they were all dismissed, as the militia had come in to take their places. But still good men were not to be spared, and again Capt. Pollard appeared and offered seven pound ten a month to those who would go to work. Stevens staid and for a week he "cukt." The Regulars fired "Bums & Bauls but Did no hurt."

On the twentieth he records, "I got a man to cuk for me & I set of for hom I got to Andover about a eleven a Clok at night I went to John Barkers to carry som things to uncle John."

Far from the turmoil and "Larumbs" of war, the next day he "fixt som bos for the oxen" and then "went to Camils & Bought som Lather for Britches." For two days it snowed and he only got out once when he went to see John Barker. The next day he helped Uncle John who is suspected of having been everybody's uncle and one of the kindest and most delightful characters in Andover.

"Munday De the 25 this morning I got up a little afore Day & yokt up fore oxen for Uncle John & set of fo Cambridg I got to Cambridg about Dusk

& then went to roxbry & got ther a little after Eight." Weary and ready for supper we may be sure. It was Christmas Day before the Christmas spirit came to New England.

After this he "cukt" and "cukt," but no details of the cuisine or the amazing daily consumption of those huskies, building barracks in the cold, or entrenching on wintry hills, are given. There was during this time a general shifting of companies whose term of service had expired for new levies coming in. "Sunday De the 31" they "praded to have there arms taking away from them they tuck my gun from me & the rest of there guns."

"Tusday Ja the 2 our men all set of hom but (Ephraim) Lasy and Enoch Parker, Jonathan Roberson & I we had orders to go to work." According to his record he again "cukt;" and one day there was double duty for he "cukt and workt som."

There was unceasing interest for these country lads in watching the progress of the new fortifications about the town and for their hours off the hills proved so attractive that a few of the Andover boys planned a little outing place there. They "got Leave for som Bords to Build us a hout."

Next day he got an obliging fellow named "jackshish" (Jaquith)* to "cuk" and he "went to work on their Little hut a Prospect hil." But their fun was of short duration. In his next day's report he tells uncomplainingly how "this Day I cukt & work on the hil jest at night there was man Com & forbid us working any longer." But there seems to have been an effective balm for their disappointment, for the same day they "had a lod of sider," perhaps intended for the dedication of the hut, "Com down by jed holt" of pleasant memory. Now Jonathan Roberson substituted as cook and he worked many days on a store for General Putnam. It was cold, uncomfortable weather and one morning as he went to "Rol Cal," he heard bad news. "There was a man cild him self a drin(ken) jen there was two men Drinkt forty five glases won Lived thay Belonged to the train I workt at the store." Next day he was again at the store and it was reported that "they set a sentry over the man that cild him self & put Brown into the pevow (provost) gard that gave the man the li(q)ur."

He was sent after "Bordes" to Watertown with no success, but in the afternoon he found two loads at Lexington. He worked at the store making bunks, with an occasional day at Fort Number Two where he laid floors. The Regulars went on an occasional rampage and one morning over at Dorchester they "Burnt the farshens," an outrage which many profound and painstaking historians have overlooked. The work on barracks and bunks continued steadily, with an occasional raising as one finished structure succeeded another. They raised a frame at the point (Lechmere) and as they boarded and shingled it "the regerlers Begun to in trench against the point." Pay days were far between, but one night he says, "I went up to the hil & got my wagers it was ten pound Eighteen shillins & seven pens thay tuck out pay for my gun that 2-8 S." For diversion there was an occasional show of war as when "at night our men got som morters Down

*This was evidently Ebenezer Jaquith of Billerica, the only one of the name in Capt. Pollard's Company. He too came to Jaffrey during the Revolution and settled on the so-called, Clark & Bennett place, as a neighbor to James Stevens and David Lacy.

to Leachmores point & split two morters & won at roxbary the regerlers fired a bum on to prospect hil." Sunday, in another military emergency, he was ordered to the point to work and "thay fired two bums." That "night our men cared Down the congress (a mortar captured from the British had been so named) Down to Cobel Hil fired her three times & Craakt her."

The next day was quiet; the regulars fired at night but did no harm. The following day and night, with much firing of "Canons & bums" there were some casualties. They "cild won man & wounded two more with a bum."

Thursday, March 7, was Fast Day and they went to meeting and heard two sermons. Later it was reported that "the regerlers cild nine or ten of our men a Sunday morning." That day there was no work. In the forenoon he went to meeting and "in the afternune I went out on to the hills & sold my gun for ten Dolers." It was the beginning of the end; the war was nearly over. The gun would not be needed, but we are sorry he let it go even for "ten Dolers," for guns of Revolutionary pedigree are greatly prized in our later day. There were two mediums of exchange in common use—the pounds, shillings and pence of England, and the Spanish milled dollar, good the world over for the silver bullion it contained. James looked after the "dolars," as they were not susceptible to depreciation, like the British currency or the practically worthless Continental paper money which later came into circulation. Work stopped on barracks and fortifications for "thay sade the regerlers was a going of." It was a true report; they were packing up and a few days later they sailed for Halifax.

On Monday, as there was no more work, "We exersist & went up to the pond & trid our guns." How like a healthy lot of young huskies to whom there was no hardship like keeping still! "Tusday it was loury" and Wednesday—we did not work & the ofisers said we wos goin to be Dismisst." And still there was no jollification, no venting of repressed enthusiasm. The next day "we wos Dismist by our Capt."—but still no fireworks.

"Saterdag March 16 this Day Jonathan Roberson & I set of for hom it rained som"—much like any other rainy day it seems, not even "jed holt com down with sider" for the celebration.

Sunday he was at home and in the afternoon "went to Meting to Boxford & herd Mr Holihok." A quiet country Sabbath, and only twenty-five miles away, Boston Harbor was alive with sails and the "regerlers" were off to Halifax.

"Mund March the 18 this Day I went up to town & got my hat Drest & then went to Deacon Chedwks to se the Boxford ofisers chose." Life had already resumed its peaceful tenor.

"Tusday March 19 this Day I went to Boxford to Dudly Carltons & paid him for som turkes thay said the Regerlers wos gon all out of Bostown & Left som Canon."

Wednesday he was about his every day concerns—reckoned with John Phillips and got a pair of shoes.

Then with a showing of interest never expressed in his diary he set off again for Cambridge, where he arrived about sunset and heard the news

that his people had taken possession of Boston, though ships of the regulars were still in sight down the harbor.

The next morning he "felt very stiff a traveling," but "went on to the hills." The next day he started for Boston and reached "Buncers hil" but could not get a pass to go into the town. Again he and Parker went on the hills and took John Parker's and Stephen Long's places in Col. Farnum's regiment. It was windy and cold but they staid on the hills and next day "praded" with the regiment. It was perhaps not such a hard life after all, and at any rate it was a year of experience long to remember. The next day he went to Boston and—with healthy curiosity—"al over town."

Wednesday, March 27, he "praded" for the last time with the regiment, and "at night the ships was under sale al most all of them." Here was a sight historic and glorious, that has been celebrated for a hundred years, as matter of fact to the victors as the harvesting of the season's last load of hay. The next day he was in Boston bent on a bargain. He bought a gun and gave "six dolers for it & got Back before night." Sunday he went to meeting and afterward carried his chest up on the hills to be transported to Andover by the truck teams going that way with baggage from the camp. He started for hom about three o'clock and got to Deacon Ballard's "and staid whilst al most Day." The next morning he set off from Deacon Ballard's, had "Bracfust" at "farther peterses" & got hom a forenune." The following day—let him tell it—"I went to Stephen Barkers & got his hos cart & went to Capt Varnums & got my chest it wos very rainy." Then followed without intermission the homely occupations of his former rural life. No Cincinnatus ever left his plow to serve his country and returned to it with less fuss than our soldier-carpenter-farmer of Andover and Jaffrey. He went to Esq. Phillip and "tuk up a note he had against me." He "workt" in the back room at home and cut out a window. With no idle moments between he set about making a small desk. He helped raise a barn, and when Sunday came he went to Boxford meeting and heard Mr Adams. He was no fair weather worshiper for this day "was rainy." He was as avid to taste the quality of a new preacher as a horseman to see a promising racer in action. He finished the desk and "went to wood chuk splitting rails" and on his way home in the gloaming came "by Stephen Johnsons & got my gun & he charged me half a Doler." One rainy day he put "brases" on the desk and another he "helpt uncle John swangle flax." It was a homely, helpful every-day life, laying up treasure in both earth and heaven.

What brought James Stevens to Jaffrey is known with reasonable certainty. Jaffrey was distinctly an offshoot of Essex County, whose towns, already settled for a hundred and fifty years, were full as population was rated in those days. There were no farms to be had at home for the growing population. Already they were over-flowing into the western wilderness. The territory of the present towns of Jaffrey and Rindge had been granted by the legislature of Massachusetts under the name of Rowley Canada. Among the first settlers of Rowley Canada was Richard Peabody of Boxford, near Andover, who had cleared sixty acres of land and built a good house and barn on the farm now owned by Henry M. B.

Stearns in the south part of Jaffrey, on the town line of Rindge, nearly thirty years before these towns were incorporated. Adjoining the Peabody farm on the north was the settlement of Moses Stickney, also of Boxford, and near by was John Hale who married Priscilla Peabody, a sister of Richard. James Stevens' mother was a cousin of Richard and Priscilla Peabody, and other friends and relatives of the Peabody family had settled, near on both sides of the present divisional line between Jaffrey and Rindge.

It is probable that soon after, or perhaps before his Revolutionary service, James Stevens came to Jaffrey to visit his relatives and spy out the land. The new township lots were the favorite speculation of the day. Andover had many interests in Jaffrey. The wealthy Phillipses of Andover with whom he had many dealings numbered in their holdings one thousand acres of land in Jaffrey, two hundred acres of which became a part of the first endowment of Phillips Academy. His former neighbors, the Ingalls and Baileys, had already moved to the new town. Capt. Thomas Poor, the first commander of his military company who spoke out so rashly to his men about their unwarranted assumption of authority, was holder of a mortgage on Jonathan Hopkinson's Mills and two hundred acres of land in the Jaffrey district we now call Squantum. From these friends and relatives James Stevens had many opportunities to learn of the attractions of Jaffrey. In January, 1777, he bought the Stickney farm, or John Grout place, adjoining that of his cousin Peabody. In buying a farm partially cleared and a house ready wrought, he showed good, practical common sense, and, according to Poor Richard, obtained "many a board and many a nail for naught." The house was, no doubt, crude and unfinished, and afforded ample employment for his spare time and skill as a carpenter from the time of his purchase until he brought home his bride in the following year. He married Elizabeth Lacy of Andover, a sister of Ephraim Lacy his former comrade in arms. She was his helpmeet and the mother of his seven children until she was borne to her final resting place in the shelter of the meeting-house and Monadnock. David Lacy, another brother of Elizabeth, became the near neighbor of James Stevens and the progenitor of all the Lacys of Jaffrey, who were prominent in business and town affairs for a hundred years. Mrs. Ephraim Lacy, who died at a good old age and was buried near her daughter in the old grave yard, was the mother of David and Ephraim Lacy and of Mrs. James Stevens.

James Stevens was the same obliging neighbor and good citizen in Jaffrey as in Andover. In September, 1777, he "marcht" all the way from Jaffrey to Saratoga, one hundred and sixty miles, with a company from his neighborhood, commanded by Capt. Daniel Rand of Rindge, "to drive the Hessians into the woods;" but, alas! he left his diary at home and any account that we might extract from the learned historians would be pale and futile compared to his. General Burgoyne surrendered at sight of the approaching legions, and Capt. Rand's company was discharged in Saratoga with a pay allowance of eight days for their march home. Again he was called into service with many of his townsmen on the occasion of an

alarm, which proved of the same character as the "alarum at Leachmores pt," when someone was "scart at the cracing of the ice." The expedition was halted at Walpole and returned home after four days service.

James Stevens prospered in Jaffrey and became a large landowner and well-to-do citizen. The gun that he sold for "ten dolers," was, no doubt, a good gun and typical of the man. He never went off at half-cock or "flashed in the pan." Thanks to his diary we know him better than any of the other early settlers of the town. We may say he was without vision or dramatic sense; but all the better for our purpose. He was not misled by the glamour of military pomp or glory, but was actuated only by a sense of duty to his home and country.

Why should he become excited over what never was and only the future could realize? He had never heard of the United States of America; it was as yet hardly a dream. He did not know that the new "jeneral," who arrived, travel stained from a wearisome journey on a drizzly day, and stood before him under the Elm of predestined fame, was to be the "Father of his Country." He never heard the little hatchet story; and Fourth of July was only one of the days of the year.

He was unhampered by spelling books or rules of syntax, and only great geniuses in literature have succeeded better in self-expression than he. He never dreamed that his diary would be printed in a book, or that it would open wide, pages in our history that scholarly historians have overlooked.

His simple, unaffected speech is like a radio broadcast out of the past. We can hear the people talking from long ago and catch the very twang of their homely speech. He spelt the words that his neighbors used as they sounded to him. When he tells us that nothing "haping extrorderly" we know what he means. He never used language to conceal thought. Hap is a good dictionary word, and why not haping as well as happening? He used housen as the plural of house, which is good old English, and only the accident of usage cut it off and allowed the kindred forms of "oxen" and "children" to survive.

He cared nothing for "pread," but whenever there was work to do he did his part. After meeting he commended the "sarmon," which we often neglect to do. Psalms were "Psams" to him, and he omitted no opportunity to attend "prars." Daniel Griffin was "drouned a going in swimmin," according to his veracious and understandable account. "Tord" night he was wont to go on the hill with "Dudly Calton" (Carlton) or other companions after his own heart. He "herd that the paist (post) was got in from London." He sometimes "tuk" a nap, but was up "arly" in the morning. He often employed a curious locution now lost to common usage, as when he "went to jos Houeys & got him to set a saw & I worked for him the whilst." He made "while" do the work of "until" as when on a night of alarm they went up to Fort Number Two and "staid while sunrise." He told the time of day by the sun. It was an uneventful day when "nothing haping extrorderly." When he "cukt" he necessarily "drad pervisions," and the day he worked in the "horspital" his life was endangered as the "regerlers fired very brisk." When he started for home he "set of arly" and got there "sun an our hy."

He bought some "lather for Britches." Perley he pronounced "parley;" and we learn that in the common usage of his time the past tense of drink was "drinkt," and of "cuk," "cukt" as many progressive spellers would make them to-day. He was thus ahead even of our time. He got to Deacon Ballard's "& staid whilst al most Day," (staid the rest of the day.) The next day he continued his journey and got home "afore nune." On one of his obliging visits he helped Uncle John "swangle" (swingle) flax.

It was good straight-forward speech, with no frills, and as a record of the camp life and every-day existence of the citizen soldier in the early days of the Revolution, no refinement of lexicographer or grammarian could better it, or add to its interest. "Alarums" and "sarmons" and "housen" are poetry now; and the life of James Stevens is a little epic of our own that will grow into heroic measure with the passing of years.

He was abstemious at a time when intemperance was common. "Sider" he used to provide strength for labor and not for hilarity. When he marched to "Woster" he had a dram going and coming as a support against the heat and burden of the day; and a "gyl of rum" that he had on occasion was a medicament to fortify the system against the chills and miasms to which a soldier was exposed. He was ahead of his day in good works and would have been a leader in temperance and clean living had he lived in later times.

If our town builders had been made to order we could not have had better than he. He brought his tools and built houses and barns. He brought his military experience and became captain of militia and constable. He brought his public spirit and the first school in his district was held at his house. He brought his good practical sense and sat with the rulers on the Board of Selectmen. He laid out roads and thousands have followed in his footsteps. He brought his love of meeting and became a member and regular attendant of Parson Ainsworth's church. He owned a pew in the meeting-house, and, better still, he filled it every Sunday. He built a horseshed to protect old Dobbin from snow and rain, for a merciful man is merciful to the beast. No doubt in this dilapidated old shelter still standing—No. 2 from the east end of the line—we may yet see the marks of his broad ax and saw. Many a Sunday and town meeting day he drove his horse beneath its dripping eaves. But there came at last a day in early spring when he passed the meeting-house and customary shed, and stopped in the field beyond by a new made mound of earth. And on the spot there stands to-day an old slate headstone with the following inscription:

SACRED

to the memory of
Lt. JAMES STEVENS
who died
March 31, 1834,
in the 85. year of
his age.

Be ye therefore ready also; for the son of
man cometh at an hour when ye think not.