

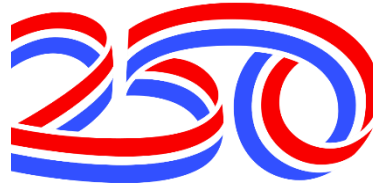
JAFFREY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
EST. 1958



We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

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AMERICA



COMMEMORATIVE EDITION

In this 250th year of American independence, we thought it appropriate to take a look at Jaffrey's role in the American Revolution. Upcoming events for the JHS can be found on page 8.

Jaffrey in the Revolution

By Peter Lambert

When the town of Jaffrey was incorporated in 1773, its population was a tiny 351 people, living in insolated, unpainted houses scattered across the township. To the casual visitor (of which there must have been few), seeing the cabins of the first settlers near the Peterborough border, the small mill along the Contoocook, the Wright Tavern south of Gilmore Pond, and the modest beginnings of a village near the center of town, Jaffrey was clearly in its infancy.

Yet that same year, 90 miles to the east, Sons of Liberty threw 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor, sparking a dramatic turn of events that would shape Jaffrey's next decade. The American Revolution would influence Jaffrey – but Jaffrey men and women would in turn do their part to influence the outcome of the Revolution, giving birth to both a town and a nation.

Following the Boston Tea Party, in 1774 the British Parliament passed a series of laws known officially as the

Coercive Acts, but Americans called them the Intolerable Acts. The Massachusetts Charter was suspended with a military government put in place, local trials were suspended, soldiers were quartered in private buildings, and the port of Boston closed. All rights guaranteed to them by English law and colonial charter were gone overnight. Colonists reacted with horror – what happened to Massachusetts could happen to them next.

A few months later, in response to a letter from the Portsmouth Committee of Correspondence, the Jaffrey Town Meeting chose Henry Coffeen, William Smiley, and Roger Gilmore to write up a covenant, to be signed by the men of the town, to “maintain our charter privileges.” This “Association Test” was essentially a

trap – any man who refused to sign was, in essence, a Loyalist. Not a single man in Jaffrey refused to sign.

On December 28 of 1774, a meeting of representatives from throughout Cheshire County was held in Keene, and it was resolved that all towns make preparations for defense by organizing militias.

Continued on next page



The emblem on the flag of the 2nd NH Regiment, in which many Jaffrey men served. Credit: New Hampshire Historical Society.

REMINDER: Please send changes of address, current email, etc. to Marcie at: mcm603532@gmail.com

Jaffrey in the Revolution, continued

Jaffrey had no organized militia at the time of its incorporation – the French and Indian wars were over and the people of Jaffrey were far more concerned with cutting trees, removing stumps, and eking out a living from the rocky soil. But now, larger issues were at play. The town voted in January 1775 to accept the Keene resolves, and the following month approved the purchase of a sufficient supply of gunpowder, lead, and flints for town use.

At the same meeting they appointed Henry Coffeen to attend meetings of the Provincial Congress in Exeter, then serving as a rival rebel government to Royal Governor John Wentworth. Most tellingly, however, they also voted to approve the Articles and Resolves of the First Continental Congress, held in Philadelphia the past October. Doing so, Jaffrey declared its belief that American colonists had the right to “life, liberty, and property” that they were “entitled to all the rights, liberties, and immunities of free and natural-born subjects, within the realm of England,” and that the recent Acts of Parliament – from the Stamp Act of 1763 to the Intolerable Acts – were illegal and they had no duty to follow them. The rumblings of independence, faint as they were, had been heard in Jaffrey.

Henry Coffeen

The one Jaffrey name that surfaces as preeminent prior to the Revolution is Henry Coffeen. He helped write a covenant to maintain the privileges of the Town Charter, he served on the Committee of Inspection, and he was appointed as a delegate to the Provincial Congress at Exeter. Coffeen showed his dedication and resourcefulness when, fearing a blockade at seaports and a scarcity of salt (the one element self-sufficient Jaffrey farmers could not produce for themselves) he privately ordered a large stock of salt and offered it to the town. Although not recognized as a battlefield hero he was nonetheless a hometown hero and a name to revere as we commemorate the 250th Anniversary. - *Bruce Hill*



Late in the evening of April 19, 1775 word reached Jaffrey via Rindge of the Battles of Lexington and Concord earlier that day. That which the people had most feared had occurred – the British Army was enforcing the Acts of Parliament with deadly force. Jaffrey men responded. With little knowledge of the outcome of the battles, they were not about to let the violence spread any further west.

Companies from Rindge, New Ipswich, Peterborough, and other surrounding towns were soon en route. Jaffrey responded in similar fashion – over 30 men (about one-third of the population of men between 16-50) set off towards Boston, the main route being via



The militia marching off to war. Credit: US Army History Center

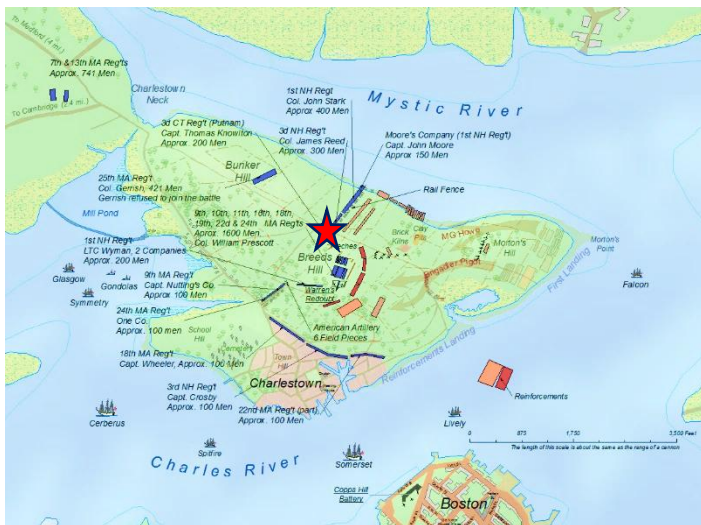
Townsend and Groton, Massachusetts. Among them were John Dole, a wolf hunter on Mount Monadnock; Francis Wright, the tavern owner; John Davidson, the town’s first permanent settler; and others from the early Jaffrey families of Cutter, Gilmore, Whitcomb, Smiley, and Ingalls.

Though the battles of Concord and Lexington were long over by the time the Jaffrey men arrived, about half of them remained stationed in Medford, Mass. to keep the Redcoats trapped in Boston. They were soon united into a company with the men of Rindge under Captain Phillip Thomas, with John Harper of Jaffrey as lieutenant. They were placed into the 2nd NH Regiment, under the overall command of Colonel James Reed of Fitzwilliam and Major Nathan Hale of Rindge. Their first duty was to guard the Charlestown ferry to Boston while they awaited a bigger fight. They did not have long to wait.

Continued on next page

Jaffrey in the Revolution, continued

On June 17, 1775 colonists occupied the top of Breed's Hill in Charlestown, Mass and were soon under attack by 3,000 British Redcoats. The Battle of Bunker Hill had begun. The New Hampshire soldiers, numbering over 1,000, were deployed along a rail fence from the top of Breed's Hill to the Mystic River to the north, under the overall command of Colonel John Stark. There, they fought off two waves of British infantry attack under General William Howe, and when the American forces were overrun, mounted a fighting retreat that saved the patriot forces from complete destruction. Sixteen Jaffrey men fought at Bunker Hill, suffering no casualties.



The Battle of Bunker Hill. Jaffrey men, under Colonel Reed, were stationed at the red star. Source: Army Historical Center

Little did they know, however, that their fellow townspeople back home were raising the town Meetinghouse on that same day. Cherished legend holds that the cannon fire from the battlefield could be heard in Jaffrey as the men raised the mighty beams and rafters.

After the Battle of Bunker Hill, a stalemate around Boston forced newly-appointed General George Washington to try a different tactic - the invasion of Quebec via Maine and upstate New York. John Dole of Jaffrey participated in this ultimately unsuccessful invasion, and was taken prisoner in Quebec City and later exchanged. He served until 1782, when he died in Albany, NY.

The state government at Exeter, deciding a more organized approach was needed to New Hampshire's enlisted soldiers, divided the state into districts for the formation of regiments. Jaffrey was placed in the 14th district, along with all the towns from Rindge north to Washington and Stoddard. Jaffrey was now required each year to furnish a certain number of soldiers for the war, based on its population. In 1776, that number was 14 additional men. Jaffrey voters met and decided to pay each man who volunteered a \$100 bonus, no small sum for a small frontier town.

Jaffrey's soldiers, now under Colonel John Stark, followed George Washington to New York City in March of 1776. When it became known that the men retreating from Quebec were under threat of attack from Native Americans, Canadians, and smallpox, an additional force was raised under Keene's Isaac Wyman and rushed to upstate New York. Fifteen Jaffrey men served in this regiment, including William Smiley, who died at Fort Ticonderoga, probably of small pox.



A drummer and fifer at Trenton. Source: Public Domain

Multiple Jaffrey men served at the battles of Long Island, Brooklyn Heights, and the other battles around New York City following General William Howe's invasion of the region in the summer of 1776. They fled with Washington across New Jersey and into Pennsylvania. On Christmas night 1776, led by Colonel Stark and General John Sullivan, they crossed the Delaware River and helped capture Trenton and, a few days later, repel the British at Princeton, New Jersey. It is recorded that Jaffrey's John Briant and Ephraim Whitcomb served as drummer and fifer during this campaign.

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Jaffrey in the Revolution, continued

In 1777, a crisis arose on the northwest frontier of New England. British General John Burgoyne, with some 8,000 Redcoats, Loyalists, Hessians, Canadian militia, and Indians, was on the march from Montreal to Albany. He had already taken Fort Ticonderoga in early July and threatened that he “have but to give stretch to the Indian Forces under my direction, and they amount to Thousands, to overtake the harden’d Enemies of Great Britain” and to unleash “the messengers of justice & of wrath...and devastation, famine, and every concomitant horror.”

The Republic of Vermont pleaded with New Hampshire to send aid, arguing that if Burgoyne was not stopped there, he would undoubtedly cross the Connecticut River. The visions of marauding bands of Burgoyne’s forces pillaging towns across northern and western New Hampshire caused an immediate reaction. The New Hampshire government named the newly promoted General John Stark to the head of its defense, to raise an army to march into Vermont and stop Burgoyne’s men.



The Battle of Bennington, by Don Troiani. Image: US Army

Jaffrey responded by calling for more volunteers to serve in the army, offering each one £4 a month, and a \$100 bonus. Most of the Jaffrey men during this campaign served in the company led by Captain Salmon Stone of Rindge, under Colonel Moses Nichols. At least 21 Jaffrey men served in this regiment, including Lt. John Stanley, Sgt. Abraham Bailey, and others having such old Jaffrey names as Gilmore, Hathorn, Ingalls, Proctor, Woodbury, and Stickney.

Soldier's Rock



Photo Credit: Vicki Arceci

Perhaps it was during the Saratoga campaign that the legend of Jaffrey’s Soldier’s Rock was born. On the south side of Route 124, halfway between the Old Toll Road trailhead and Bullard Road, is a large boulder that is usually marked with a flag or two. According to legend, one night a group of soldiers were traveling over the mountain, perhaps towards Keene and Fort #4, and camped in the shelter of the boulder. During the night, one of the men died, and his comrades buried him beside the rock before moving on. Although there are very few sources to verify this legend, or even verify which of the numerous boulders in the area was the site of alleged burial, Jaffrey marks it all the same. After all, there’s no proof there wasn’t a patriot buried there once!

These men joined General Stark’s force, already numbering 1,500 (about 10% of New Hampshire male population), and marched to Fort #4 on the Connecticut River, and then to Bennington, Vermont. Joined by some Massachusetts militia and the Green Mountain Boys, Stark’s force handily defeated 1,500 Hessian troops near the Vermont border in Walloomsac, New York.

Though defeated, Burgoyne’s army was still a major threat, and more men were needed. Another company was raised, again led by a man from Rindge, Daniel Rand. Nine men from Jaffrey joined, including Lt. David Stanley, Corporal Benjamin Dole, Bezaleel Sawyer, and Solomon Turner. These men marched 160 miles to Saratoga, New York – a journey of 8 days in 1777 – and helped force the eventual surrender of General John Burgoyne in October. This victory, in turn, sealed the American alliance with France the following February. Following Burgoyne’s surrender, some of the Jaffrey men marched south to join Washington’s army in winter quarters at Valley Forge,

Continued on next page

Jaffrey in the Revolution, continued

Pennsylvania. One Jaffrey man, Isaac Wesson, died there – leaving behind a widow and several small children back home.

After Saratoga, there was very little action in the northern states, save an expedition to drive the British from Newport, Rhode Island. Sixteen Jaffrey men served in this ill-fated expedition, in a company led by Samuel Twitchell of Dublin. Nevertheless, Jaffrey men served in ranger companies along the western border of New Hampshire and served in a regiment raised for the defense of West Point, New York.

For the last few years of the war, records are hazy. Jaffrey men served in the various Continental Army “New Hampshire Line” regiments, and some in local



Uniform worn by the New Hampshire Line of the Continental Army. Source: NY Historical Society

militia groups that were called upon from time to time. The Town chose committees every year to hire soldiers the state demanded, pay them a bounty, and send them on their way.

However, since New England was no longer on the front lines and most of the action taking place down South, men from other towns and states would volunteer to serve for Jaffrey, and vice versa. This was more for the pay than the need to

defend their homes from invasion. Additionally, some Jaffrey men moved out of town and served elsewhere, and men who had served previously came to Jaffrey to live. Nevertheless, in his *History of Jaffrey*, Albert Annett insists that residents of Jaffrey “continued to serve in the ranks of the Continental Army up to the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown” and that is a reasonable assertion to make.

Remarkably, only one Jaffrey man died in combat during the war – Isaac Leland, who lived on the western shore of Contoocook Lake just north of the

town line. He died in September 1777 in New York – while serving on behalf of Rindge. All told, well over 100 men, contemporary or future residents of Jaffrey – served in the American Revolution. The following men from Jaffrey died from disease: John Dole, David Hunter, William Smiley, and Isaac Wesson.

Without a doubt, Jaffrey did its part during the founding of this nation. The sacrifice of the men and women of the town was notable, and we still enjoy the rights and privileges they helped earn to this day. We should remember them during this 250th Anniversary, and every Independence Day.

Benjamin Prescott



Colonel Benjamin Prescott is often seen as a Revolutionary war hero – and in a way he was, and wasn't. He came to Jaffrey in 1772. As he was building a house in Squantum in 1775, a party of militia from Rindge stopped by on their way to Boston to help him out. A few days later, one of those men, George Carlton, was killed at Bunker Hill. Colonel Prescott was a member of the Jaffrey militia and was only called out during the war once – after the British attack on Royalton, Vermont in 1780. But the militia got as far as Walpole before they were sent home – his total time in service was four days. He gained the title Colonel for his service in the peacetime 12th NH Regiment *after* the Revolution. However, his son Oliver was also a colonel in the 12th NH Regiment, his son Eldad served as a captain, and his son John was captain of the Jaffrey Rifle Company. So, the family had quite the military history – with all but four days during peacetime!

A Hessian in Our Midst

By Alan Rumrill & Historical Society of Cheshire Co.

Johan Buchler was born in Hesse-Darmstadt, Germany, in 1756. Young Johan was well educated and lived in comfort in Germany because of the success of his father's soap making business.

At the age of 20 years, however, he learned that his name was included in the draft of Hessians sold to England to serve in the army against the American colonies in the Revolutionary War. Johan fled from home to escape the service, but was caught at the



German border and sent to England. From there he was shipped to Canada to join General John Burgoyne's British Army.

He served until October of 1777, when Burgoyne surrendered his entire army after its disastrous defeat at the Battle of Saratoga. The Hessian prisoners were sent to detention camps in central Massachusetts. Johan soon escaped and headed north into the woods of New Hampshire. He arrived at Jaffrey in about 1778 and decided to stay. It was

A Hessian Grenadier. Photo: LOC

obvious that he was a Hessian and he was viewed with suspicion, but he made no trouble and kept to himself.

Someone in town discovered that Johan was a cabinetmaker. The Jaffrey Meetinghouse had been sitting unfinished for three years and the Hessian was hired to complete the paneling and finish the inside of the building. His reputation spread and he was hired to work on other meetinghouses and did other cabinet work.

Johan decided to stay in Jaffrey permanently. He soon changed his name to John Buckley, bought some

land, built a house and married a local girl by the name of Peg Dunlap. He eventually bought a 100-acre farm, continued his cabinet making business, and he and Peg raised a family of six children. Former Hessian prisoner of war John Buckley became a successful farmer and businessman in Jaffrey. (His house still stands, at 27 Dublin Road.) He passed away there in 1817 at the age of 61 years and was buried in the cemetery behind the Jaffrey meetinghouse, thousands of miles from his native Germany. (Reprinted with kind permission)

One Patriot's Story

By Meg Gourley

One soldier from Jaffrey, James Stevens, left a journal of his experiences during the war, which diary is housed at the Essex Institute in Salem, Mass. He came to Jaffrey in 1777, but in 1775 was living in Andover, Mass and working as a housewright. He joined the company of Minutemen in January of 1775 as it became clear that hostilities between the mother country and the colonies may come to a head.

On April 18, 1775 word came that the British forces were marching toward Concord, where the Boston munitions were stored. The Andover men were late to the scene but they saw along the road the aftermath of the battle. Following the battles in Lexington and Concord, the minutemen encircled Boston to trap the British forces inside the city. General William Heath ordered the thousand provincial volunteers to stay in Cambridge.



Col. Nathan Hale of Rindge, who commanded many Jaffrey men during the war. He was later taken prisoner and died on a prison ship in New York. Photo: Bridgeman Images

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One Soldier's Story, continued

This hastily organized force grew to nearly 16,000 men in the following weeks, including 12 from Jaffrey, 98 from New Ipswich, 54 from Rindge and 65 from Peterborough. Stevens was part of this crowd encamped in Cambridge. What follows here are excerpts from James Steven's diary. Because his spelling was a miracle of versatility, I am mercifully changing it up for the modern reader:



Camp life in the Revolution was famously tedious, repetitive, and unsanitary – but had its occasional excitements.
Image credit: historycambridge.org

April 1775 Saturday the 22nd was lousy weather. Went to the neck towards Charlestown. When the sun was about an hour high, we paraded. Sunday went to a meeting and heard a sermon. Then went on parade and paraded all day and then at night was sent on guard. Then went home and got our supper and then went on guard and stayed all night. One day the Indians burnt the image of Gen. Gage's head on the common. Steven Barker came down from Andover and brought us some garden vegetables.

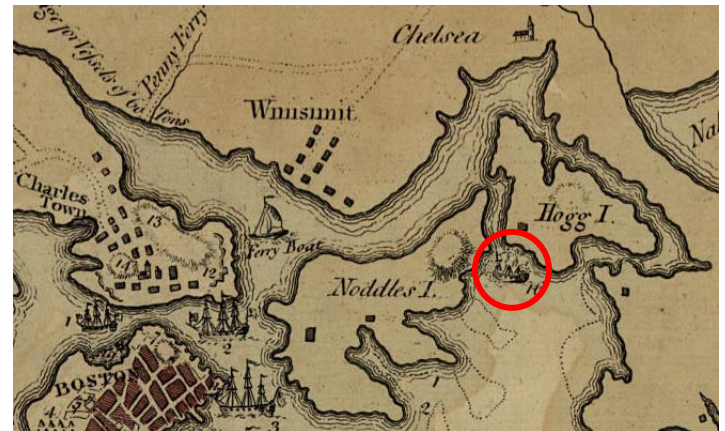
(Next Sunday) ...heard president Langdon of Harvard preach from Matthew 10c 28 verse, in the afternoon I went about a mile and a half back towards home and heard a sermon from 1d and 13 verse. (Ed. Note: No excitement, military or otherwise, could keep our boy from a sermon.) A soldier died, a stranger to me. After guard, went to Watertown to see the canon and bombs. Came back and paraded and went to hear prayers.

May 27, 1775 We went and worked in the forenoon we come home to dinner and there was a party going of summer but where I can't tell – we got ready to go and there come and

express that the regulars (British) was a landing some said at Miskit (Mystic) but we marched very fast and got down within a quarter of a mile of the ferry and the halted, and our officers went to look out to place the canon, they went round by the water and while they come in sight of the schooner when as soon as the regulars saw our men they fired on them.

When the firing begun on both sides and fired very warm, there came a man and ordered us over a knoll right into the mouths of the canon, we got onto the top of the knoll and the grapeshot and cannonballs so thick that we retreated back to the road and then marched down to the ferry, the regulars shouted very much.

Our men got the canon and blasted them and gave them two- or three-gun sides and the firing set in some measure and there was a terrible cry amongst the regulars. They fired wane and awhile all night. About ten o'clock the schooner ran onto the ways and stuck fast; there came a sloop for her relief, they left the schooner.



The northeastern part of Boston, from a 1775 print. The Battle of Chelsea Creek is circled in red. The area is now Logan Airport.
Image credit: Library of Congress

May 28, 1775: About day, they come with their barges to board the schooner. Col. Putnam came and ordered us down to the wharf and we fired so that they retreated back to the sloop. Our men run down and fired the schooner and it burnt very fast. (Ed. Note: This was the Battle of Chelsea Creek, brought about when they attempted to rescue livestock seized by the British.) The sloop begun to go off in about three-quarters of an hour after it was set on fire the magazine blowed up and blowed some plunder they fired from Noddle's Island on us, sun about an hour high. We retreated

Continued on next page

One Soldier's Story, continued

back to our packs and got our breakfast, the sloops dragged off to Boston. There was of our men wounded four and none killed.

After the fire was got down, the men went out and got the plunder out of the wreck. In the afternoon there come down about 400 men to relieve us and there was of us about 120 men of us towards night, and they got teams and carried a load off to Cambridge and we stayed all night.

The diary tells us a lot about life in camp. Besides parading, standing guard, cooking, witnessing prisoner exchanges and burying comrades who fell ill, our boy used his skills to make a couch for Maj. Enoch Poor.

There was insubordination, punishment and sermons. There were marine captives from Machias and Long Island who came in. There was a constant exchange of news.

On July 12, Stevens records that he heard prayers and then went and built a table for a grog shop. The next day he heard prayers and in the afternoon, there was a piece read that the Continental Congress put out. This was the Declaration of Independence!

The JHS has many copies of the complete Lt. Stevens diary, with original spelling, available in booklet form. They were published in the 1920s.

To get your free copy, stop by and grab one!



Sunday, July 5 - 4-6 PM

Civic Center Lawn

A true community potluck!

A FREE EVENT! LIVE MUSIC!

Bring some food for us all to share.

No signups or admission charge.

Bring your own beverages.

(non-alcoholic only, please)

This is an opportunity for people to share some food and enjoy conversation in true American fashion.

No agenda, no speeches.

Tables, some chairs, small tents, and tableware will be provided.

Bring serving utensils for your items.

PLEASE JOIN US!

Major sponsors: JHS, VIS, 1st Church, UCJ, Women's Club, Rotary, Civic Center, and many other community members and organizations,

UPCOMING DATES

- July 2: Executive Team, 4 pm
- July 4: *Declaration of Independence reading, noon, Jaffrey Meetinghouse
- July 5: *America's Potluck, 4-6 PM, Downtown
- July 9: Board of Directors, 4 pm
- August 6: Executive Team, 4 pm
- August 13: Annual Meeting 6 pm, Civic Center
- September 1: Executive Team, 4 pm
- September 10: Board of Directors, 4 pm
- October 1: Executive Team, 4 pm
- October 17: Annual Outing, Fitzwilliam
(More info to come!)

Jaffrey Historical Society
40 Main Street
Jaffrey, NH 03452

