



The 1st Pennsylvania Regiment

The events set in motion by the Boston Tea Party of 1773 included an increase in the number of British troops stationed in and around the town of Boston, and a coincident increase in the resentment of the Massachusetts Colony toward Britain. Prior to that time, the individual states maintained loosely based military units called variously *Associators* or *Militia*. The Militia was not a standing army in the sense of soldiers being enlisted for any set periods of service; it was pretty much a "citizens army" in which individuals would agree to leave their homes to fight, if called upon. The militiamen were also known as Associators because they had agreed to associate themselves with one another in the desire for independence and protection against the British military forces.

In September and October of 1774 the 1st Continental Congress was convened at Philadelphia to determine how the colonies might respond to the Coercive Acts (which had been the British Parliament's way of dealing with Boston's refusal to allow the tea shipment to be unloaded and her intransigence over the previous few years). A proposal was made by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia to form a nationwide militia for the colonies' mutual defence. That proposal was rejected by the Congress, which at that time felt that reconciliation with Britain could be achieved along with expanded rights for the colonies. The need for armed resistance might not be necessary if the problems could be worked out through diplomacy.

Massachusetts, feeling the immediate need for defense, with the pressure of the acts of the British Parliament pushing on it every day, held a Provincial Congress on 26 October 1774. A military program based on the pre-existing militia was adopted. That pre-existing militia had actually been patterned, itself, upon the British model employed during the previous colonial wars between Britain and France. Directions were given to the militia officers to reorganize their companies in a more efficient manner than had been previously accepted. The Provincial Congress knew what it was up against; it would need unity and organization to confront the well-trained British army. This Massachusetts militia included (comprising a quarter of its total number) special forces which became known as *Minutemen* because of the directive that they be ready at a minute's notice to turn out in case the Committee of Safety announced an emergency. The Massachusetts Provincial Congress then sent requests to her neighboring colonies to participate in her *New England Army* for their mutual defense.

After the events at Lexington and Concord, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress reconvened on the 22nd of April, 1775 and authorized the Committee of Safety to enlist a New England Army of 30,000 men, 13,600 of which would be furnished by Massachusetts; the rest would be requested from the colonies of New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut and New York. The Committees of Correspondence spread the word, and within two months, the Massachusetts troops were being joined by others. A continental army was taking shape.

On May 10th of 1775 the 2nd Continental Congress met in Philadelphia. The New England colonies urged the Continental Congress to adopt the stance that the military confrontations taking place were not simply the effects of a regional issue, but rather that the New England colonies were defending themselves against the British aggression, which could easily extend to their sister colonies to the south. The Congress declared itself a *Committee of the Whole* to "take into consideration the State of America". One of the recommendations taken into consideration by this Congress was to orchestrate the movements of the various growing colonial and provincial militias.

On 14 June 1775 the Congress adopted the "American Continental Army" and called for ten companies of expert riflemen to be raised and trained within the mid-Atlantic colonies to be sent to the aid of the New England Army. By asking for recruits from the mid-Atlantic region, the Congress hoped to promote a feeling of unity between all the colonies and provinces, and also to project an image of unity to the rest of the world. Pennsylvania was requested to raise 6 of the companies; Virginia and Maryland were each to raise 2 companies. The positive response to this request was so great in the northern and western frontier counties of Pennsylvania (including Bedford) that the Pennsylvania Assembly, on the 22nd of that month, authorized two additional companies to be formed.

The American Continental Army would come to consist of brigades, regiments and companies designated as the *Continental Line*, and each state tended to give its own names to the troop lines. Pennsylvania called her regimental units: *battalions*. The Continental Line, from the beginning, was made up of recruits who enlisted for a certain set period of service, and who would be compensated monetarily for that service. (The other form of Patriot was the militiaman who was not considered a professional soldier, and therefore did not receive pay.) The recruits of the Continental Line, because they could expect payment for their services, were in turn expected to serve faithfully for the entire length of their service term. Whereas the members of the militia were free to return to their homes when their services were not actively required, the Continental Line soldier could not just come and go as he might please. (The effect of this "professional" service would be severely tested by the encampment at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777-8.)

Col. William Thompson's Battalion of Riflemen was the designation given to the eight companies which formed in Pennsylvania in the summer of 1775. By the 11th of July, Congress was informed that two companies instead of one had been raised in Lancaster County, and so Thompson's Battalion of Riflemen was comprised of nine companies when it set out for Boston. Captain James Chamber's Company and Captain William Hendrick's Company were raised in Cumberland County, Captain Michael Doudle's Company was raised in York County, Captain James Ross' Company and Captain Matthew Smith's Company were raised in Lancaster County, Captain George Nagel's Company was raised in Berks County, Captain Abraham Miller's Company was raised in Northampton County, Captain John Lowdon's Company was raised in Northumberland County and finally Captain Robert Cluggage's Company was raised in Bedford County.

The William Thompson's Battalion of Riflemen was redesignated on 1 January 1776 as the *1st Continental Regiment*. On 24 April it was assigned to Sullivan's Brigade, part of the *Main Army* (as General Washington chose to name the Continental Army placed under his command), but then on the 29th of that same month it was reassigned to Greene's Brigade in the Main Army. The *1st Continental Regiment* went through quite a number of reassignments (all within the Main Army) over the next few months. On 12 August 1776 the regiment was assigned to Nixon's Brigade, then on August 31 it was reassigned to Mifflin's Brigade (which, on 8 October 1776, was simply redesignated as Stirling's Brigade). On the first day of 1777 the regiment was reorganized and redesignated as the *1st Pennsylvania Regiment*. On 22 May 1777 it was relieved from Stirling's Brigade and reassigned to the *1st Pennsylvania Brigade*. On January 17, 1781 the *1st Pennsylvania Regiment* was consolidated with the *10th Pennsylvania Regiment*, maintaining the name of the *1st*. It was furloughed at Trenton, New Jersey and reorganized at Ashley Hills, South Carolina on 1 January 1783, and assigned to the Southern Department. On the *1st* of June, 1783 the *1st Pennsylvania Regiment* was reassigned to the Middle Department. It was furloughed on June 11 at Philadelphia, and finally disbanded on 15 November 1783.

During its occupation, the *1st Pennsylvania Regiment* had been involved in the siege of Boston between the 20th of April, 1775 and the 17th of March, 1776. The British troops occupying Boston were besieged by the American Patriots. A number of small raids and skirmishes, including the Battle of Bunker Hill, were engaged in before the British finally evacuated the city. From April 3 to November 16, 1776 the *1st Continental Regiment* participated in the engagements around New York City in the American attempt to prevent the British under General Howe from entering the city. By the loss of New York, the American army was discouraged and marched southward toward Trenton, New Jersey. During this time, James Ross was promoted to the rank of Major, prompting Captain Robert Cluggage and Captain Matthew Smith to resign. The period of December 8, 1776 to January 6, 1777 saw the *1st Continental* (now the *1st Pennsylvania Regiment*) taking part in the actions whereby Washington surprised and captured the Hessian troops under Colonel Rall on Christmas Day, 1777. The Americans then moved on to Princeton, where they achieved another victory before going into winter camp at Morristown.

The Defense of Philadelphia is the name given to the engagements which the *1st Pennsylvania*

Regiment participated in from the 25th of August, 1777 (when General Howe's redcoats landed at the Head of Elk River in the Chesapeake for his attack on Philadelphia) until the 19th of December (when the American forces decided to bivouac for the winter following the Battle of Edge Hill). During this campaign, the regiment took part in the battles of Brandywine and Germantown. The 1st Pennsylvania, under the leadership of Colonel James Chambers, was one of seven regiments which made up the 1st Pennsylvania Brigade, under the command of Brigadier General Anthony Wayne. It was Wayne's 1st Pennsylvania Brigade which Washington (on his "retreat" following Brandywine) had assigned to remain behind near the Paoli Tavern with the directive to fall on and capture Howe's baggage train. Five thousand of Howe's troops under the command of Major General Grey attacked Wayne's 1,500 men with bayonets only. The British troops were commanded to remove the flints from their muskets so that there would be no accidental firing to alert the Americans. The attack caught Wayne's men by surprise, resulting in the Americans, many of whom did not have bayonets, being unable to defend themselves properly. The Patriots lost 53 men, and 100 wounded to the British's 4 killed and 7 wounded. Luck certainly was not on the side of Wayne's brigade. After the Paoli Massacre, the remaining troops fled westward to join with Washington's full force, which then pushed eastward to attempt to catch Howe in his advance on Philadelphia. At Germantown the Americans caught up with the British on October 4, 1777. The direct attack on the British center was assigned to the troops under generals Sullivan, Conway and Wayne. Because of their eagerness to avenge their losses at Paoli, Wayne's Pennsylvanians made a forceful thrust against the British Second Light Infantry Battalion. The British were pushed steadily, and the battle appeared on the verge of becoming an American victory until General Stephens (who was drunk at the time) brought his division up at Wayne's rear. Thinking that the troops ahead of him were the British, Stephens ordered his men to open fire. The 1st Pennsylvania Brigade had now to contend with fire from both sides, and the British were able to make a stand and a counterattack. That which could have been a splendid American victory, with Bedford County men claiming a great share of the credit, became a discouraging defeat. (One good thing resulted from the catastrophe at Germantown. General Washington replaced Stephens with a young Frenchman who would prove invaluable to the American cause in the future: the Marquis de Lafayette.)

Following the rigorous training of the American troops at the Valley Forge encampment, they were able to function as a more cohesive and disciplined unit. The British, under General Henry Clinton began to evacuate the city of Philadelphia in mid-June of 1778 (General Howe had requested, and was granted a resignation early in the new year). Washington directed some of his troops to follow the British and harass them as they marched eastward through New Jersey. His main body of troops caught up with and engaged the British to the north of Monmouth Court House. The 1st Pennsylvania Regiment, as part of Wayne's Brigade, which Washington sent as an advance body under General Charles Lee to attack the enemy's rear guard, was in the center of the action and held their ground until confused orders from General Lee caused disorder in the ranks. The Americans fell back about a half mile to the west. There, reinforced by the rest of Washington's arriving army, they stood firm and the British were forced to give up the battle and head for New York.

Throughout the remainder of 1778, and on through 1779 and 1780 the 1st Pennsylvania Regiment, still part of the 1st Pennsylvania Brigade under General Anthony Wayne, took part in what General Washington claimed was a siege of Clinton's forces on Manhattan Island. The fact of the matter was that the American Continental Army was exhausted, and the sojourn in northern New Jersey gave Washington's troops a much needed rest.

Of the regiments making up the Pennsylvania Continental Line, the 1st Pennsylvania Regiment was the only one which included men enlisted from Bedford County. Although not every (if even any) compatriot member of the Blair County Chapter, S.A.R. can trace his lineage to a Patriot member of the 1st Pennsylvania Regiment, that group of Patriots should be remembered and honored for being the body of professional troops which represented this central-Pennsylvania region. The record of the engagements which the 1st Pennsylvania Regiment participated in is impressive and something that the Blair County Chapter can be proud of as being a portion of the rich patriotic heritage bequeathed to us by the members of Captain Robert Cluggage's Company.

NOTE: For further information on the 1st Pennsylvania Regiment from its inception as the Thompson Battalion of Riflemen in 1775 to its disbanding in 1783, see the Pennsylvania Archives, Series 2, Volume X. Another authoritative source for information on the Pennsylvania Continental Line can be found in *The Continental Army*, by Robert K. Wright, Jr (one of a three part series on the Revolutionary War produced for the Army Lineage Series /United States Army Center Of Military History), 1968.

REMINDER: The next quarterly meeting will be held on October 10 at 12:00 noon at Kings Family Restaurant.

CONSTITUTION DAY DINNER

The Constitution Day Dinner for 1992 will be held on September 12 at the Altoona Ramada. The Dinner will be hosted again this year by the Blair County Chapter, SAR with members of the Adam Holliday Chapter, DAR and the Col. John Proctor Chapter, DAR as invited guests. This year, we will also be inviting the Bedford County Chapter, DAR and the Standing Stone Chapter, DAR to join us. In view of the fact that the region covered by the Blair County Chapter, SAR includes Bedford and Huntingdon Counties, we feel it is fitting and proper that we extend to those DAR Chapters this invitation. The luncheon (of Chicken Piccata and rice, fresh fruit cup, spinach and mushroom salad, green beans almondine and sherbet) will begin at 12:00 noon. The luncheon will be followed by some remarks by Judge Jolene Grubb Kopriva. The cost of the dinner will be \$12.00 per person. Those wishing to attend should respond with their reservations by Wednesday, September 9, 1992 to Larry D. Smith, Treasurer, RD #1, Box 704-A, East Freedom, PA 16637. As in previous years you may pay at the Dinner, but please notify Larry of the number who will be able to attend by the 9th.



VETERANS TAKE NOTICE

The Blair County Chapter, SAR is pleased to have passed a motion at the last quarterly meeting to honor all members who were veterans of the wars which the United States of America has been engaged in for her own (and her allies') defense. The means by which the Chapter plans to honor its veteran members is to purchase and distribute the War Service Medal (which is offered by the National Society, Sons of the American Revolution). If you are a veteran of any of the wars this nation has participated in, please submit the following information to the secretary of the chapter: Bernard R. Smith, RD #1, Box 704, East Freedom, PA 16637. You might wish to photocopy this back page and mail it, or simply note your information on a separate sheet or postcard and mail that to the secretary. Either way you do it, please do not be modest in your sharing of the information. We are proud of you and want to have this information on file.

Name _____

War Served In _____

Branch of Service _____

Organization _____

Highest Rank Attained _____

Years Served/Active Duty _____

Action Participated In:

Do you give permission to have this information published in a future issue of this newsletter?