



#3 1995

A Chronology Of The Revolutionary War

with emphasis on Bedford County, Pennsylvania's role

Continued

1775

"Hannah Bradish, of that part of Cambridge, called Menotomy, and daughter of Timothy Paine, of Worcester, in the county of Worcester, esq. of lawful age, testifies and says, that about five o'clock on Wednesday last, after-noon, being in her bed-chamber, with her infant child, about eight days old, she was surprised by the firing of the king's troops and our people, on their return from Concord. She being weak and unable to go out of her house, in order to secure herself and family, they all retired into the kitchen, in the back part of the house. She soon found the house surrounded with the king's troops; that upon observation made, at least seventy bullets were shot into the front part of the house; several bullets lodged in the kitchen where she was, and one passed through an easy chair she had just gone from. The door of the front part of the house was broken open; she did not see any soldiers in the house, but supposed, by the noise, they were in the front. After the troops had gone off, she missed the following things, which, she verily believes, were taken out of the house by the king's troops, viz: one rich brocade gown, called a negligée, one lutestring gown, one white quilt, one pair of brocade shoes, three shifts, eight white aprons, three caps, one case of ivory knives and forks, and several other small articles."

Hannah Bradish's deposition was made to Thomas Steel and Timothy Paine on 26 April, 1775. Seven days earlier the British troops had been little more than a threat to Hannah's safety and feeling of well-being. If she was keeping abreast of the news of what was happening around her, she probably knew that the British had heightened their presence in and around Boston. She may also have been aware that tensions were increasing between the colonial citizens and the British troops sent to Boston. She, like so many others might have hoped that the rumors of war would prove false ~ that a reconciliation between the colonies and the mother country would be possible. More than anything else, Hannah probably figured, or at least hoped, that nothing would happen to her personally; if a war broke out it would be others ~ the emerging militia movement led by the Sons of Liberty ~ who would become involved. Now she found herself a victim. The loss of Hannah Bradish's, and her fellow colonists', naivety was one of the casualties of the war.

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In order to find out why Hannah Bradish became one of the first victims of the American

Revolutionary War, we need to return to the Massachusetts countryside between the small villages of Lexington and Concord on the morning of 19 April, 1775. Ahead of the column of British troops that was marching steadily toward Concord, galloped young Dr. Samuel Prescott with the news that the British were heading in that direction. He had been near Lexington Green with his sweetheart when the minutemen made their stand against the column of red coated troops. Prescott had started on his ride to Concord just before the fracas on the common at Lexington began. Several hours later others came riding into Concord and the surrounding countryside to rouse the residents from their sleep.

Militia companies from all over the region were forming and heading toward Concord. Even though they were not all aware that a confrontation had already taken place at Lexington, they had been alerted that Concord was the destination of the British forces, and it was toward Concord that they also headed. The residents from throughout Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk and Worcester Counties had been alerted by a number of riders. Paul Revere and William Dawes were not the only men who had been recruited by Dr. Joseph Warren to spread the news of the British movement.

While Samuel Prescott rested, a Concord resident – the town's saddler, Reuben Brown climbed on his own horse and sped back to Lexington to confirm Prescott's story. He arrived in sight of Lexington Common only an instant before the volley of British musketry struck down eighteen of the colonial militiamen, eight of which were mortally wounded. He waited only long enough to take in what was happening before hurrying back to Concord. When he arrived there he found that two local militia companies and one from the nearby village of Lincoln had already assembled.

By seven o'clock, as the British column approached within a mile or so of the town of Concord, nearly four hundred minutemen had heeded the call and assembled at the town common. According to Amos Barrett, a corporal in David Brown's Company:

"The Beel Rong at 3 oClock for alarum. as I was then a minnit man I was soon in town and found my Capt and the Rest of my Compny at the post. it wont Long Before thair was other minit Compneys. one Compney I believe of minnit men was Rais^d in a most every town to Stand at a minits warning. before Sunrise thair was I beleave 150 of us and more of all that was thair. we thought we wood go and meet the British. we marched Down to wards L[exington] about a mild or mild half and we see them acomming. we halted and stay^d till they got within about 100 Rods. Then we was orded to the about face and march^d before them with our Droms and fifes agoing and allso the B[ritish]. We had grand musick."

A low ridge, roughly a mile in length, bordered along the north side of the road, its western end in the vicinity of the Concord town square. At the square, the road from Lexington turned sharply north and followed another ridge a short distance until it met the Concord River. A bridge, known as the North Bridge crossed the river and traveled perhaps two miles along the north side of the river before reaching the farmstead of Colonel James Barrett. Colonel Barrett was the commander of the Concord militia. His farm was one of the primary targets of the British advance because they believed that it was there that the greatest quantity of ammunition, cannon and stores had been secreted away. The British would not find the military stores and ammunition they thought they would find there. Those things had been removed upon the first reports of a possible raid by the British, and hidden in various other farmhouses in the nearby vicinity.

Brown's company of militia retreated back toward the town and took up a position on the low ridge to the north of the road. Lieutenant John Barker, of the King's Own Regiment, later recounted:

"We met with no interruption till within a mile or two of the town, where the country people had occupied a hill which commanded the road. The Light Infantry were ordered away to the right and ascended the height in one line, upon which the Yankees quitted it without firing, which they did likewise for one or two more successively. They then crossed the river beyond the town, and we marched into the town, after taking possession of a hill with a liberty pole on it and a flag flying which was cut down. The Yankees had that hill"

but left it to us. We expected they would have made a stand there, but they did not choose it."

The British set about searching for military stores in the town. The colonial militiamen, in the meantime, knowing that the British intent was to make their way across the river enroute to the Barrett farm, decided to form a defensive line to block their path on the other side.

Colonel Smith ordered seven of his companies of Light Infantry under the command of Captain Lawrence Parsons of the Tenth Regiment to proceed to the west side of the Concord River. They were to then proceed on to Barrett's farm where they hoped to capture the arms and ammunition their reports stated were stored there. They saw the colonial militia assembling on the ridge on the opposite side, but they appeared to pose no direct threat to them. Captain Parsons ordered the Light Company of the Forty-Third and the company of the Fifth Regiment to stay and secure the bridge while his and the other four companies would go on to Barrett's farm. Parsons, a short while later, sent a courier back with instructions for Captain Walter Sloane Laurie to send the Light Company of the Fifth toward Barrett's farm. That left only Laurie's own company at the North Bridge.

For whatever reason, the colonials allowed the six companies of the British infantry to pass them. It is possible that the reason they did not instigate a skirmish at that time was because their numbers were so small in comparison to the British. The militiamen believed that the British numbered nearly twelve hundred. The colonials numbered only a couple hundred, and although additional militia units were still making their way toward Concord, those already there might not have known help was on the way.

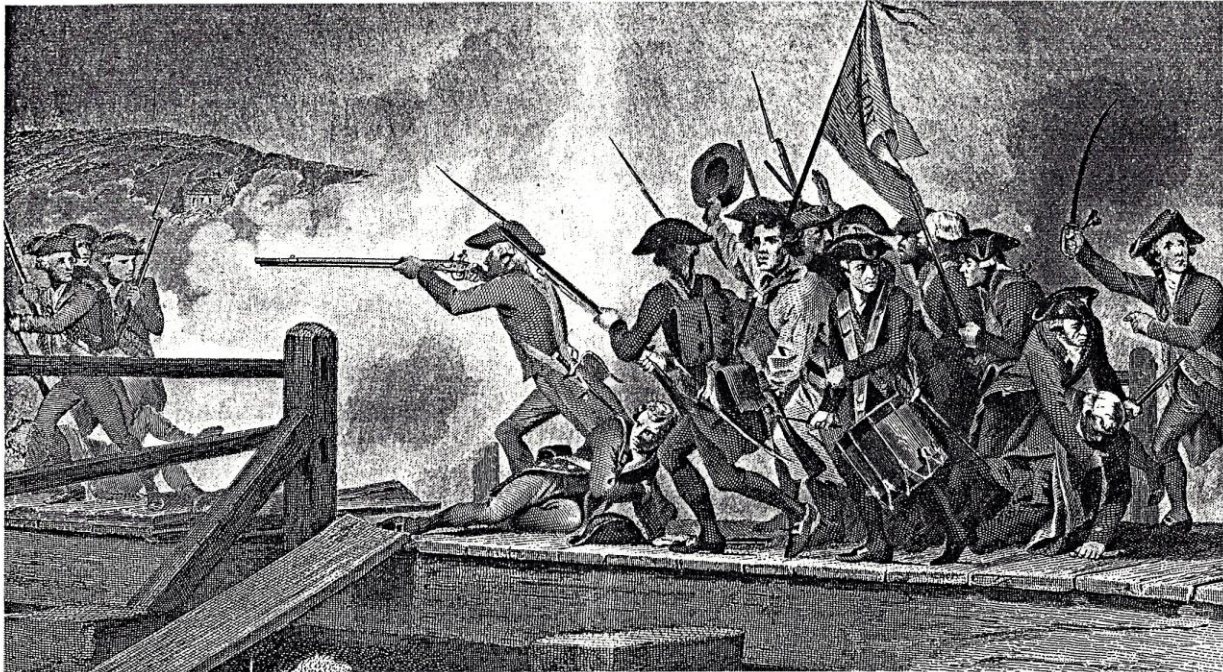
By the time the Light Company of the Forty-Third, only about thirty men strong, was left alone to guard the North Bridge, the militiamen from surrounding areas such as the towns of Bedford, Acton and Lincoln were just arriving to join their fellow Massachusetts minutemen. The number of militia on Punktasset Hill grew to about four hundred and fifty in a short span of time. Laurie's isolated situation was growing tense.

According to the depositions sworn to by several of the militiamen:

"...we saw the Troops moving towards the North Bridge, about one Mile from the said Concord Meeting House; we then immediately went before them and passed the Bridge just before a party of them, to the Number of about two hundred, arrived; They there left about one half of their two hundred at the Bridge, and proceeded, with the rest, towards Col. Barretts, about two Miles from the said Bridge; we then seeing several fires in the Town, thought the Houses in Concord were in danger, and Marched towards the said Bridge; and the Troops that were stationed there, observing our approach, marched back over the Bridge, and when we had got near the Bridge, they fired on our men, first three Guns, one after the other, and then a Considerable Number more; and then, and not before (having orders from our Commanding Officers not to fire till we were fired upon) we fired upon the Regulars and they Retreated."

The militiamen's concern about the houses of the town being on fire, or at least in danger of burning, was well founded. The court house was ablaze. A nearby blacksmith shop had also been set afire. The scene in the town was described by an elderly widow, Martha Moulton. A group of British troops appropriated her house alongside the village common for use as their headquarters.

"...all on a sudden they...set fire to the great gun carriages just by the house, and while they were in flames [Martha] saw smoke arise out of the Town House higher than the ridge of the house. Then your petitioner did put her life, as it were, in her hand, and ventured to beg of the officers to send some of their men to put out the fire; but they took no notice, only sneered. Your petitioner, seeing the Town House on fire, and must in a few minutes be past recovery, did yet venture to expostulate with the officers just by her, as she stood with a pail of water in her hand, begging of them



to send, etc... The house still burning, and knowing that all the row of four or five houses, as well as the school house, was in certain danger, your petitioner (not knowing but she might provoke them by her insufficient pleading) yet ventured to put as much strength to her arguments as an unfortunate widow could think of; and so your petitioner can safely say that, under Divine Providence, she was an instrument in saving the Court House, and how many more is not certain, from being consumed, with a great deal of valuable furniture, and at great risk of her life. At last, by one pail of water after another, they sent and did extinguish the fire."

The colonial militiamen who had moved to the west side of the Concord River were drawn up on a ridge known as Punktasset Hill. Seeing the smoke rising from the town they protested to their leaders that they should not stand idly by while the British destroyed the town. Major John Buttrick, of Concord, who assumed command of the militia which was congregating on the hill, agreed that they should march back toward the town and attempt to push the redcoats out. The Acton militia, consisting of thirty-eight men under the command of Isaac Davis, took the lead. Two fifers in the Acton company began to play the song *The White Cockade*. The militia companies, numbering nearly four hundred, were untrained and undisciplined in the art of warfare, but they moved down the slope of Punktasset Hill in an orderly fashion toward the single company of British light infantry that was guarding the North Bridge. "Guarding" was not really the word for it; they were tearing up the planks. The British once more opened fire upon the militiamen, but luckily for the colonials, their initial aim was such that not a single shot met its mark. The militiamen thought they might only be firing powder, but a close call or two convinced them otherwise. Amos Barrett noted that:

"it is Straing that their warnt no more kild but they fird to high."

The militiamen returned the volley and twelve British regulars fell dead. Four of the dead were officers. In the militia ranks, two were killed, one of whom was Captain Davis. The colonial militia, albeit untrained, were able to force the British troops from the bridge.

Edward Thoroton Gould, a lieutenant in the King's Own Regiment, made a declaration to three Justices of the peace of Middlesex County on 25 April, 1775. He noted that:

"On our arrival at that place, we saw a Body of provincial Troops armed, to the Number of about sixty or seventy Men... [following the first engagement at the ridge north of the town] they retreated towards Concord... in the mean Time, [after the colonial militia moved to the west side of the river] the provincial Troops returned, to the number of about three or four hundred. We drew up on the Concord side [of] the Bridge, the provincials came down upon us, upon which we engaged and gave the first Fire; This was the first Engagement after the one at Lexington; a continued firing from both parties lasted thro' the whole Day; I myself was wounded at the Attack of the Bridge, and am now treated with the greatest Humanity, and taken all possible Care of by the provincials at Medford."

The militiamen, despite having gained control of the North Bridge and effectively dividing the British troops, lacked good central leadership. They split into two groups rather than concentrate of holding the bridge. The one half returned to the west side of the river to look for and gather up any wounded or dead comrades. The other half returned to Punktasset Hill. Three companies of British troops under the command of Captain Lawrence Parsons took advantage of the unguarded bridge and were able to cross the river and reinforce the companies which had gone to Barrett's farm. Once they reunited, Colonel Smith decided it was no use to continue searching any longer; no military stores or consequence had been uncovered. At some time close to noon the British column was reformed and began their march back toward Boston.

Resistance was not given at the North Bridge by the militiamen. They had returned to the east side of the river and were regrouping along the ridge that lay just to the north of the town. The colonial militiamen allowed the British troops to retire from the town of Concord for a distance of about a mile, then the redcoats spoiled their good luck. As the British regulars marched past the site known as Merriam's Corner, they fired into a body of militia there. That action sparked the beginning of the British flight back to Boston and (for them) some of the deadliest fighting of the entire expedition. A British Ensign by the name of De Berniere later wrote that:

"All the hills on each side of us were covered with rebels...so that they kept the road always lined and a very hot fire on us without intermission. We at first kept our order, and returned their fire as hot as we received it; but when we arrived within a mile of Lexington our ammunition began to fail, and the light companies were so fatigued with flanking they were scarce able to act; and a great number of wounded, scarce able to get forward, made a great confusion."

Lieutenant Barker, of the King's Own Regiment, echoed De Berniere's sentiments about the nightmare that they now found themselves in.

"We were fired on from all sides, but mostly from the rear, where people had hid themselves till we passed and then fired. The country was an amazing strong one, full of hills, woods, stone walls, etc., which the rebels did not fail to take advantage on, for they were all lined with people who kept an incessant fire upon us, as we did too upon them, but not with the same advantage, for they were so concealed there was hardly any seeing them. In this way we marched... their numbers increasing from all parts while ours was reduced by deaths, wounds, and fatigue..."

The British were harried by the colonial militia the whole way back to Boston. Despite their officers' attempts to maintain order and keep the troops in formation, the soldiers broke and ran much of the way. Ensign De Berniere noted that after passing Lexington some of the officers were able to get in front of their men and used the threat of bayoneting them if they continued to advance in such an unorderly fashion. Under heavy fire from the colonial militia, the lines attempted to reform. Troops designated for flanking maneuvers swept through the surrounding countryside and were somewhat, but not wholly, successful in flushing out groups of the sniping militia. The

column was slowed down, though by the flanking maneuvers, and that resulted in more of the British soldiers being hit by the sniper fire. There was quite a bit of bloodshed on both sides along the road between Concord and Boston.

A relief force of about one thousand men under the command of Brigadier General Hugh Percy had been ordered out from Boston by General Gage at four o'clock in the morning, but it did not get started until closer to around nine o'clock. That relief force met up with Colonel Smith's retreating troops around two o'clock in the afternoon just east of Lexington. The reinforcements, and the two fieldguns they brought with them, temporarily halted the militia's sniping. The British fired the six-pound balls into the woods; they probably frightened, more than hurt, the militiamen who were not expecting them. Nearly an hour passed as both sides paused and stopped firing. Then, as they restlessly lingered and as they started to continue their trek homeward to Boston, the British troops began to plunder and set fire to houses in the vicinity. The passions of the colonial militia were again aroused.

Frederick Mackenzie, a lieutenant with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, wrote profusely about the retreat to Boston. His comments about the renewed inflammation of firing hit the mark.

"Many houses were plundered by the soldiers, notwithstanding the efforts of the officers to prevent it. I have no doubt this inflamed the rebels and made many of them follow us farther than they would otherwise have done. By all accounts some soldiers who stayed too long in the houses were killed in the very act of plundering by those who lay concealed in them."

Another British participant observed that the entire populace, including women and children, had become inflamed to action by the wanton destruction by the British troops. His comments in a letter to friends in England noted that:

"...even women had firelocks. One was seen to fire a blunderbuss between her father and husband from their windows. There they three, with an infant child, soon suffered the fury of the day. In another house which was long defended by eight resolute fellows, the grenadiers at last got possession, when after having run their bayonets into seven, the eighth continued to abuse them with all the [beastlike rage] of a true Cromwellian, and but a moment before he quitted this world applied such epithets as I must leave unmentioned..."

The British, after an hour, had traveled only about two miles from Lexington when they came to the village of Menotomy, where Hannah Bradish resided. The village was composed of a number of houses and other buildings in clusters spread out for a distance of about a half mile along the main road. As the regulars continued their passage down the street through the town, it is estimated that about eighteen hundred militiamen, who had just newly arrived from their Massachusetts homesteads and were fresh for the fight, descended upon the redcoats. It was here that the fiercest of the close-quarter fighting of the day took place. Lord Percy attempted to break up the militia's onslaught by firing his fieldpieces into their ranks. That tactic did not result in the desired effect, but rather simply tore up the road and demolished some of the houses. The British, cornered as they were by the fresh militia companies, found their second wind and fought savagely like wild animals trapped and cornered. The British officers lost much of the control they had gained when they quit Lexington earlier in the day. And, inevitably, this was where more innocent bystanders would find themselves becoming victims and casualties of the, as yet, undeclared war. The Reverend William Gordon, of the town of Roxbury, noted that whatever valuables could not be stolen of the houses were smashed into pieces and that doors, sashes and windows were wantonly damaged and destroyed. Hannah, the wife of Deacon Joseph Adams, mimicked Hannah Bradish's comments when she later declared:

"divers of them entered our house by bursting open the doors, and three of the soldiers broke into the room in which I then was laid on my bed, being scarcely able to walk from my bed to the fire and not having been to my chamber door from my being delivered in childbirth to that time. One of

said soldiers immediately opened my [bed] curtains with his bayonet fixed and pointing...to my breast. I immediately cried out, "For the Lord's sake, don't kill me!" He replied, "Damn you." One that stood near said, "We will not hurt the woman if she will go out of the house, but we will surely burn it." "I immediately arose, threw a blanket over me, went out, and crawled into a corn-house near the door with my infant in my arms, where I remained until they were gone. They immediately set the house on fire, in which I had left five children and no other person; but the fire was happily extinguished when the house was in the utmost danger of being utterly consumed."

Cooper's Tavern stood at the east end of the village. Two local townsmen were calmly drinking their mugs of flip when they heard the sound of the melee to the west. The one suggested leaving at that point, but the other assured him they had time to finish their drinks. Before they could drain their mugs, the redcoats burst upon the tavern. The episode that followed was described by the owners of the tavern to the Provincial Congress.

"The King's Regular troops...fired more than one hundred bullets into the house where we dwell, through doors, windows, etc. Then a number of them entered the house where we and two aged gentlemen were, all unarmed. We escaped for our lives into the cellar. The two aged gentlemen were immediately most barbarously and inhumanly murdered by them, being stabbed through in many places, their heads mauled, skulls broke, and their brains beat out on the floor and walls of the house."

Militia General William Heath was a member of the Massachusetts Committee of Safety. He, along with four others, had been appointed only sixty days earlier to command the colony's militia forces in case of the outbreak of hostilities. In the morning, about daybreak, he had been alerted that the British column had marched toward Concord. After meeting with other members of the Committee of Safety, General Heath started to ride toward Lexington. Enroute he met up with Dr. Joseph Warren, and the two of them rode on to Lexington. They reached that place shortly after Percy's reinforcements had joined with Smith's retreating troops. Heath lost little time in attempting to organize a regiment of the militiamen out of the scattered units who were harassing the redcoats. to give the British a proper fight. But that fight never came. By the time the British reached the Charlestown Neck, the colonial militia now under the command of General Heath had swelled to nearly three thousand. But General Heath made the decision not to pursue the British soldiers any farther. Noting that *"any further attempt upon the enemy in that position would have been futile"*, he ordered a guard to be posted near the Neck where any new movements of the British could be watched, and he dismissed the rest of the militia. The militiamen did not leave though; they formed a great semicircle around Boston and maintained a vigil there over the next few weeks. They would form the nucleus of General George Washington's Flying Camp and, ultimately, the Continental Line.

The British casualties included seventy-three men who had been killed, and between one hundred and seventy-five and two hundred wounded or missing out of the eighteen hundred that embarked on the futile mission. They had marched over thirty-five miles in twenty hours, the last ten of which was they were under almost constant fire. The colonists, out of an accumulated force of about thirty-five hundred, had lost only forty-nine men killed and forty-six wounded or missing.

The American Revolutionary War had begun. News of the Lexington-Concord incident was sent to the inhabitants of Great Britain by way of a letter from Joseph Warren, president of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress dated 26 April, 1775. The letter, though, did not arrive until late-May. On 29 May, 1775 the "rumour of war" spread through the parliament at Whitehall. A despatch from General Gage confirming the seriousness of the incident did not arrive until nearly a month after that. On 23 August, 1775 the King declared the colonies in "open and avowed rebellion". Parliament enacted legislation in December declaring the colonies outside of the protection of the Crown. The delegates from the few colonies who had objected to declaring independence now had reason to change their minds.

This chronological history of the Revolutionary War will be continued in a future newsletter.

3rd Quarterly Meeting

The 3rd Quarterly Meeting of the Blair County Chapter, SAR will be held on Saturday, July 8, 1995 at 12:00 noon. The meeting will be conducted at the Kings Family Restaurant in Altoona. Please plan on attending this meeting and participate in a sharing of ideas and information.

The guest speaker for the meeting program will be Compatriot Alvah J. Williams. The subject of Mr. Williams' discussion will be "John Blair ~ His Family's Revolutionary War Background and His Relationship To The Blair County Chapter, SAR".

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An Apology

I would like to extend an apology to the members of the Blair County Chapter, SAR (and ~ via spouses ~ to members of the Colonel John Proctor Chapter, DAR) for the lack of a notice to attend the Flag Day Luncheon which the Col. John Proctor Chapter, DAR had invited us to attend recently. I misinterpreted the purpose of a letter I received from Regent Betty J. Boslet on May 13 and failed to distribute any notices to the members of our SAR chapter. I have been working steadily and almost non-stop for two years now on a history book for the 150th Anniversary of Blair County. I am, as a result, very remiss in answering correspondence. I received the DAR invitation to their Flag Day Luncheon (held on June 10 at the Ramada) and glanced over it. I did not, at first, associate it with anything I (or my father, as secretary of this chapter) should send out notices of. I put it aside with all the other correspondence I have not had time to respond to, and about two days prior to the date requested for the RSVP I found a few minutes to look through my stack of accumulating letters. When I had taken the time to read it, I asked my dad if he had also got an invitation. I assumed that the copy I received was simply my own personal copy and that he would have gotten one also. He responded that he had not received one, and it occurred to us that perhaps it was meant for us to send out notices to our fellow chapter members. Needless to say, there was no time to get anything printed up and mailed out. So I extend my sincere apologies for this (hopefully one-time) faux-pas.

☆ AMERICANISM COMMITTEE ☆

During the 2nd Quarterly Meeting, the formation of a new committee for the Blair County Chapter was approved. That committee has been named the Americanism Committee the primary purpose of which will be to consider subjects and develop resolutions regarding the ideals and meanings of being a citizen of the United States of America: "Americanism". The committee will be chaired by E. Merle Glunt.

Graves Registration Committee Update

Although I have not submitted any reports recently on my progress with the Graves Registration Committee of which I am the chairman, I have been working on that project whenever time permits. At the present time I have the records of Patriots buried within the bounds of Blair County just about completed. I have also worked on some of the records of Bedford, Fulton and Huntingdon Counties. The reason this project has taken a long time is that I want every record to be valid and correct. That means that I need to verify the information collected together by previous historians. I am attempting to identify at least one primary source for reference to the Patriots' war service. In some cases my task has been to verify service itself; *family tradition* does not represent valid verification of service in the American Revolutionary War. I will present a complete set of my records, when completed, to the Blair County Chapter, the PASSAR and the NSSAR.
