



#3 1998

The Bedford County Resolves

The following letter was sent by the Bedford County Committee of Correspondence to the Pennsylvania Committee of Correspondence at Philadelphia. It was dated 09 May, 1775, which, to put in a historical perspective, was the day before Ethan Allen took Fort Ticonderoga (see *Newsletter #4 1995*) and just twenty days after the "shot heard 'round the world" was fired at Lexington (see *Newsletter #2 1995*).

This letter, which I have christened *the Bedford County Resolves*, gives evidence of Bedford County's intention to join the Patriot Cause. It is interesting to conjecture about just when and under what circumstances the Bedford County officials decided to embrace that Patriot Cause. News did not travel very quickly in the mid-1700s. In fact it traveled very slowly in comparison to our present-day technology and transportation speeds. The dispatches that were sent to Philadelphia following the capture of Ticonderoga took eight days to reach the representatives of the colonies assembled in the First Continental Congress; news of Allen's victory on the 10th did not reach Philadelphia until the 18th

of May. It is only logical to assume that news of such events were not directly conveyed to the frontier regions. The dispatches would have been sent initially to Philadelphia, to the Continental Congress. They would next have been read in the Pennsylvania Assembly, and then they would have been disseminated to the various counties of the Province. The officials in Bedford County might not have received word of the Battles at Lexington and Concord until the first week of May. No record is extant to tell us exactly when the news was received or even whether it, in any way, influenced Bedford County's decision to issue its letter of resolves. In view of the fact that the Provincial Convention of Pennsylvania had issued its own set of *Resolves* nearly a whole year before (*i.e.* 15 July, 1774) and Bedford County had not followed suit, as had many of the eastern counties, it must have been the outbreak of open hostilities in Massachusetts that goaded the residents of Bedford County to take action at this time.

Gentlemen: Not long fince we were favoured with your letter of the 18th ultimo, encloufing the melancholy news of a number of Troops being ordered for America; in confequence of which we advertifed a meeting of the County Com~mittee, when the following Refolves were unanimoufly entered into:

At a meeting of the General Committee of the County of Bedford, held at Bedford, the 9th day of May, 1775, in purfuance of a notice for that purpofe from the Committee of Correspondence for the faid County:

George Woods, Efquire, Chairman.

Refolved unanimoufly, That this County will immediatly form themfelves into Military Afsociations, and prepare themfelves, in order to defend their lives, liberties, and properties, from any illegal attempts made againft them.

Refolved unanimoufly, That each Townfhip in this County fhall be immedi~ately notified to afsemble themfelves at a certain day and place moft convenient for that purpofe, and then and there, by ballot or otherwife, choofe Officers

in their respective Townships.

Resolved unanimously, That the said Officers, when chosen, shall make out a Roll, and each man shall subscribe his name in said Roll; and that the Captain shall immediately transmit a copy thereof to the Committee of Correspondence at Bedford.

Resolved Unanimously, That the Committee of this County shall purchase all the Powder and Lead in any store that may be had within the said County, and have the same put up in some safe Magazine in the Town of Bedford, for the use of the said Soldiers; and that each Company shall, by subscription, make up a proportionable part of the same; which Ammunition shall not be distributed without the orders of the Committee of Correspondence of the said County, or until it shall be thought necessary by this Committee, or a majority of them.

Resolved unanimously, That each Company in this County shall use their utmost endeavors to purchase or provide all the Ammunition they can, so that no person in the said Company shall have less than one pound of Powder, and Lead in proportion.

Resolved unanimously, That as soon as the said Companies are formed, they and each of them shall be subject to military regulations and discipline, in the same manner as any other of His Majesty's Troops are, (corporeal punishment only excepted.)

Resolved unanimously, That in case any person or persons in this County shall refuse to subscribe himself in a roll of some Company in the said County, in order to defend the cause of liberty now contending for, or by any ways or means whatever discourage or disunite the said Associations, that then he or they so offending shall be immediately reported by some of the officers of their respective Townships, to the Committee of Correspondence at Bedford, in order that such steps may be taken as by the said Committee may be thought most prudent; and that, in the mean time, no person or persons within the said County shall, directly or indirectly, have any dealing or commerce, by either buying or selling, borrowing, or lending to or with any of the said offenders.

Resolved unanimously, That all persons within this County that are not at present provided with Guns, Swords, or Tomahawks, in case of ability shall provide for themselves; and in case of inability, that the Captain of each Company shall immediately transmit their names, or their number, to the Committee of Correspondence at Bedford, that proper measures may be taken in order to provide for them.

Resolved unanimously, That each Township shall meet and choose their Officers, and make return agreeable to the above Resolves, within the space of ten days from this date.

By order of the Committee of Correspondence: David Eppy, Clerk.

The idea of military "Associations" had existed throughout the American colonies since the time of the French and Indian War. The contempt and disgust, which the native British held for their colonial cousins, was widespread and overt. Despite the fact that the majority of the colonists had come from the British Isles, the British held the viewpoint that the Americans were inherently less intelligent than themselves, and that they were devoid of manners and gentility. The accepted method for a man to advance in military rank was through his social connections. Tales abound of the practice of British families purchasing military rank and position for their males who had come of age. The British viewpoint of the Americans was that the colonials possessed no social structure and

standing. A consequence of that viewpoint was that Americans were generally excluded from joining the British regular army and, in many cases, of holding any rank in their own militia units. The Americans began to associate themselves together in quasi-formal military units, which became known as the "militia association."

The leadership positions in the militia associations, as exemplified by the *Bedford County Resolves*, were chosen rather than purchased. As noted in the second resolution, the male residents of each township were instructed to assemble on a given day "and then and there... choose Officers..." The choice of officers was, therefore, not purchased or appointed by family connections. The men chose their leaders according to who was most liked and respected

within the community. Of course, oftentimes the person who was chosen had been liked and respected precisely because of their wealth and social standing in the community. But every man had a chance at advancement if he showed the desire and initiative.

The wording of the sixth resolution is interesting to note. According to that resolution, the men in the militia companies were to be subject to the same military regulations and discipline as "any other of His Majesty's Troops..." In May, 1775, the colonies had not yet declared their independence from the mother country; the issuing of the Declaration of Independence was over a year away. In fact, as seen in the example of the Olive Branch Petition, there were still a number of men who were strongly urging that the colonies not advocate a break with Great Britain. They believed that the King and Parliament might be convinced to grant concessions to the colonies without severing the political and economic ties. Apparently, the Bedford County Committee of Correspondence, like so many others, believed that cautionary measures needed to be taken. On the other hand, they might not necessarily have assumed that an eight year long war and the complete separation between the mother country and her colonies would result.

The seventh resolution clearly spelled out the penalties for non-compliance with the route the Committee of Correspondence had set for the county residents. Anyone who did not associate with the Patriot Cause - and/or who tried to thwart the efforts of those who did - would be ostracized.

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Now, let's take a brief look at the circumstances that led up to the *Bedford County Resolves*. In May, 1775, when the Committee of Correspondence of Bedford County drafted its nine *resolves*, the public officials for Bedford County included James Piper (Sheriff), John Stillwell (Coroner), Thomas Urie and Robert Moore (Tax/Excise Collectors), Thomas Smith (Prothonotary, Register and Recorder), Arthur St. Clair (Clerk of the Quarter Sessions of the Peace), Bernard Dougherty (member of the Assembly), and the following men who served as Justices of the Peace: Robert Cluggage, Thomas Coulter, Samuel Davidson, Bernard Dougherty, Richard Hogeland, Abraham Keble, William Latta, Henry Lloyd, Abraham Miley, John Piper, William Proctor Jr, Thomas Smith, Arthur St. Clair, Elias Stillwell, and George Woods.

The Committee of Safety was chosen on 09 May, 1775 and consisted of Samuel Davidson, David Espy, George Funk, Thomas Smith and George Woods. Although records do not exist to confirm it, there is the possibility that a meeting was called between the various public officials who chose three of their number (Davidson, Smith and Woods) and then added Espy and Funk, who were not, up to that time, office holders.

A collection of resolves was drafted by Pennsylvania's Provincial Convention on 15 July, 1774. As will be seen in the text of these resolves, the Provincial Convention and their resultant *Resolves* were motivated by the activities then occurring in Boston. The text of the *Pennsylvania Resolves* follows:

Unanimouly refolved I. That we acknowledge ourfelves, and the inhabitants of this province, liege subjects of his Majefty, King George the Third, to whom they and we owe and will bear true and faithful allegiance.

Unan. II. That, as the idea of an unconfitutional independence on the parent ftate is utterly abhorrent to our principles we view the unhappy differences between Great Britain and the Colonies with the deepeft diftreffs and anxiety of mind, as fruitlefs to her, grievous to us, and deftructive of the beft intereft of both.

Unan. III. That it is, therefore, our ardent defire, that our ancient harmony with the mother country fhould be reftored, and a perpetual love and union fubfift between us, on the principles of the conftitution, and an interchange of good offices, without the leaft infraction of our mutual rights.

Unan. IV. That the inhabitants of thefe colonies are entitled to the fame rights and liberties within thefe colonies, that the fubjects born in England are entitled to within that realm.

Unan. V. That the power afumed by the parliament of Great Britain to bind the people of thefe colonies, "by ftatutes in all cafes whatfoever," is unconfitutional, and therefore the fource of thefe unhappy differences.

Unan. VI. That the act of Parliament, for fhutting up the port of Bofton, is unconfitutional; oppreffive to the inhabitants of that town; dangerous to the liberties of the Britifh colonies and therefore that we confider our brethren at

Bofton as fuffering in the common caufe of thefe colonies.

Unan. VII. That the bill of altering the adminiftration of juftice in certain criminal cafes within the province of Mafsachufetts Bay, if pafsed into an act of parliament, will be as unconftitutional, oppreffive and dangerous as the act above mentioned.

Unan. VIII. That the bill for changing the conftitution of the province of Mafsachufetts Bay, eftablifhed by charter, and enjoyed fince the grant of that charter, if pafsed into an act of parliament, will be unconftitutional and dangerous in its confequences to the American colonies.

Unan. IX. That there is an abfolute necefsity, that a congreff of deputies from the feveral colonies be immediately afsembled to confult together and form a general plan of conduct to be obferved by all the colonies, for the purpofes of procuring relief for our fuffering brethren, obtaining redrefs of our grievances, preventing future diffenfions, firmly eftablifhing our rights, and reftoring harmony between Great Britain and her colonies on a conftitutional foundation.

Unan. X. That, although a fufpenfion of the commerce of this large trading province, with Great Britain, would greatly diftreffes multitudes of our induftrious inhabitants, yet that facrifice and a much greater we are ready to offer for the prefervation of our liberties; but in tendernefs to the people of Great Britain, as well as of this country, and in hopes that our juft remonftrances will, at length, reach the ears of our gracious fovereign, and be no longer treated with contempt by any of our fellow fubjects in England, it is our earneft defire, that the congreff fhould firft try the gentler mode of ftating our grievances and making a firm and decent claim of redrefs.

XI. Refolved, by a great majority, That yet notwithstanding, as an unanimity of councils and meafures is indifpenfably necefsary for the common welfare, if the congreff fhall judge agreements of non-importation and non-exportation expedient, the people of this province will join with the other principal and neighboring colonies, in fuch an afociation of non-importation from and non-exportation to Great Britain as fhall be agreed on at the congreffes.

XII. Refolved, by a majority, That if any proceedings of the parliament, of which notice fhall be received on this continent before or at the general congreffes, fhall render it necefsary in the opinion of that congreff for the colonies to take farther fteps than are mentioned in the eleventh refolve; in fuch cafe the inhabitants of this province fhall adopt fuch farther fteps and do all in their power to carry them into execution.

Unan. XIII. That the vendors of merchandize of every kind, within this province, ought not to take advantage of the refolves relating to non-importation in this province or elfewhere but that they ought to fell their merchandize which they now have or may hereafter import at the fame rates they have been accuftomed to do within three months laft paft.

Unan. XIV. That the people of this province will break off all trade, commerce and dealing, and will have no trade, commerce or dealing of any kind with any colony on this continent, or with any city or town in fuch colony, or with any individual in any fuch colony, city or town which refufe, decline or neglect to adopt and carry into execuuiou fuch general plan as fhall be agreed to in congreffes.

Unan. XV. That it is the duty of every member of this committee to promote, as much as he can, the fubfcription fet on foot in the feveral counties of this province for the relief of the diftreffed inhabitants of Bofton.

Unan. XVI. That this committee give inftructions on the prefent fituation of public affairs to their representatives, who are to meet next week in afsembly, and requelt them to appoint a proper number of perfons to attend a congreff of deputies from the feveral colonies, at fuch time and place as may be agreed on, to effect one general plan of conduct for attaining the great and important ends mentioned in the ninth refolve.

George Woods, one of Bedford County's Justices of the Peace attended that Convention. So one might assume that the news of the activities of the Pennsylvania Provincial Convention and the issuance of the Pennsylvania Resolves was conveyed by Mr. Woods personally to his fellow Bedford County officials who had begun to meet in the newly constructed two-story limestone court house standing on the northwest corner of the public square in the town of Bedford. Various, or all, of the other public officials might then have been contacted to meet over the ensuing days and weeks to discuss and recognize the provincial *Resolves*.

Despite the provincial lead, and the fact that Bedford County was indeed represented at the Provincial Convention, it would appear that Bedford County did not immediately jump into action like some of the other Pennsylvania counties. Cumberland County was first to establish a Committee of Observation, which it did on 12

July, 1774 (also which, it should be noted, was actually three days prior to the issuing of the *Pennsylvania Resolves*.) Berks County's Committee of Observation was established on 05 December, 1774. York County followed with setting up its Committee on 16 December, 1774. Chester County established its Committee of Observation on 20 December, 1774. Northampton County's Committee was set up on the 21st of December, 1774. Two counties, Washington and Westmoreland, established their Committees of Observation after Bedford, both on the 16th of May, 1775.

The only other document (other than the *Bedford County Resolves* and a letter dated 11 February, 1775) that has survived extant to this day which gives any evidence of Bedford County's response to the *Pennsylvania Resolves* was a public notice issued by Robert Galbraith on the 10th of February, 1775. That document stated that:

"Publick notice is hereby given, that for the encouragement of Induftry and Manufactures, and agreeable to the recommendation of the General Congrefs, and of the Provincial Convention, that a Premium of Five Pounds will be paid by the Committee of Correpondence for the County of Bedford, to the perfon who fhall erect the firft Fulling Mill in the faid County.

Three Pounds to the Perfon in the faid County who fhall make the fineft and beft piece of Linen Cloth.

Forty Shillings to the Perfon who fhall make the next beft piece.

Twenty Shillings to the Perfon who fhall make the third beft piece; each containing not lefs than twenty yards, of Flax of the growth of this county.

And Twenty Shillings to the Weaver, who fhall weave the fineft piece before the 1st of October next."

The public notice would, without doubt, have been issued in response to the resolves which called for a boycott of goods manufactured and imported from Great Britain. No record was kept to reveal who, of the county's inhabitants,

tried for and received the prizes offered.

On the next day, 11 February, 1775, at a meeting of the Provincial Committee of Correspondence the following letter was entered into the minutes.

Ordered, That the following Letter from Bedford County, in this Province, be publifhed.

Sir: We were yefterday favoured with your letter enclofing the Refolves of the Provincial Convention, and we have the pleafure to inform you that we not only unanimoufly and heartily accede to them ourfelves, but (it being the time of the Appeal) we had the opportunity of communicating them to a large number of our conftituents, who to a man fignify their warm approbation of them.

For our own parts we confider fuch prudent and patriotick Refolves (whatever may be the ifsue of our prefent unhappy difpute with the parent ftate) to be the moft effectual means of promoting induftry, economy, wealth, peace, freedom, and happinefs amongft a loyal people, who, confiftent with true loyalty are determined to hand down that liberty to their pofterity which they have enjoyed at the expenfe of fo much of the blood of their Britifh forefathers.

It is with peculiar fatifaction, we afsure you, that the people of this County fhew the greateft unanimity and even anxiety in complying, as far as in them lies, with the Refolves of the Congrefs and of the Convention. For that purpofe

we have subscribed a sum of money, and advertised through the County that certain premiums will be given to the persons who shall excel in such branches of Manufactures as we have recommended them to apply themselves to, being such as we, from our local and other circumstances, could hope to undertake with any prospect of success, and such will be of most general use, and view.

It was impossible for us, by reason of our distance, to attend the Convention on such short notice as we had; but you will be informed by this time that the three first named of us were, amongst others, deputed for that purpose; and they, in the capacity of Deputies for this County as well as all of us in that of the Committee of Correspondence for the same, take this method to testify our thankful acceptance of every one of the Resolves of the Convention, and that we consider ourselves as much bound by them, to every intent and purpose, as if we had been present when they were entered into.

The officials of Bedford County might have met over the following month to discuss the events that were unfolding all around them in the province of Pennsylvania and in the neighboring colonies. We have no record of their meetings, though, if they did in fact hold such. The only evidence we have to show that they continued to cultivate a mien of agreement with the growing Patriot Cause was their completion, on the 9th of May, of the *Bedford County Resolves*. That document signaled, in no uncertain terms, Bedford County's pledge to support the Patriot Cause.

As a postscript, I would like to add a comment about the *Resolves* themselves. The letter containing the county's nine resolutions (which though not so named in the transcription, I have taken the liberty to call the *Bedford County Resolves*) has not been previously printed in any of the history books pertaining

to this region. In fact, the letter was not even included in the published Pennsylvania Archives. It was printed in only a single source, the American Archives, Series 4, Volume I, pages 542-543. I found the letter while researching documents pertaining to Bedford County during the American Revolutionary War for my soon-to-be-published book, *Mother Bedford And The American Revolutionary War*. Although the nine volumes of the American Archives are more difficult to find as compared to the Pennsylvania Archives (which can be found in practically every county historical library), they are not completely inaccessible. It astounds me that no previous history of Bedford County (or any of the present-day counties which descend from Bedford) would have included this extremely important document. I am pleased to have been able to share it with the rest of the Blair County Chapter.

3rd Quarterly Meeting, 1998

The 3rd Quarterly meeting of the Blair County Chapter will be held on June 27, 1998 at the Kings Family Restaurant in Altoona. The meeting will begin at 12:00 noon. Please plan to attend.

Congratulations

Special congratulations are extended to two Compatriot members of the Blair County Chapter, SAR: Edgar R. Hartt and Dr. Richard C. Murray. Mr. Hartt recently graduated from Juniata College with a B.A. Degree in History and Art History. Congratulations on that achievement. Dr. Murray recently retired after fifty years of practicing medicine. Congratulations on reaching such a distinguished milestone and best wishes on your retirement.