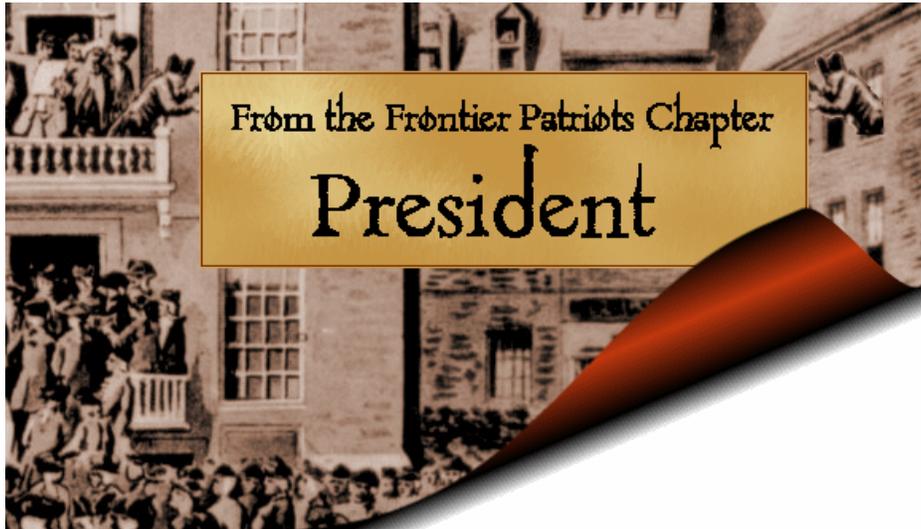


This is NewsLetter Issue No. Two ~ For the year 2015



The next meeting of the Frontier Patriots Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution will be held at King's Family Restaurant, 3001 W 6th Avenue Road,

Altoona, PA on Saturday, June 6, 2015 starting at 12 Noon.

Compatriot Melvin McDowell will be wearing his regimental uniform to the June meeting along with the accoutrements such as the Brown Bess musket on loan to him from the 5th PA regiment and give a short presentation about the uniform

We will also be discussing future chapter activities including the recent membership survey. This discussion will include plans to increase our membership. The total number of chapter members continues to decline and we hope that you will attend this meeting to add your input to the plans to increase the chapter membership. If you can't attend the meeting, I hope that you will encourage family and eligible friends to seek membership. We have membership brochures available if you need them to help attract a new member. Just give me a call or drop me an email at [dhammaker@aol.com](mailto:dhammaker@aol.com)

I hope to see you on June 6

# The Liberty Pole



The Liberty Pole, an object of no small significance was embraced by the American rebels throughout the English Colonies during the Revolutionary War period. It was an object that originated in the ancient Greek and Roman Empires, and which would be utilized to announce and proclaim *Liberty* even after the American Revolutionary War had ended. The French, when they overthrew their sovereign, embraced the Liberty Pole with as much fervor as their American cousins.



The foregoing image shows *America* on the right side, holding a flag staff which doubles as a Liberty Pole. Anyone viewing this cartoon knew exactly what was being implied by the cap on the pole which was being held by the 'native' figure of *America*.

So what exactly was a *Liberty Pole*? The *Liberty Pole*, while being a very simple object, was one which aroused passions and rallied Patriots to espouse and embrace liberty.

The word 'rally' perfectly describes the function of the Liberty Pole because the raising of one was intended to induce townsfolk to rally around it. Once the crowd began to swell in numbers, a spokesman for the local contingent of the Sons of Liberty, Committee of Safety or other Patriot group would speak to the crowd, exhorting them to join the Patriot Cause or to take some other sort of action. The raising of the Liberty Pole was, at once, a beacon to call forth those who hungered for liberty and a symbol of defiance to the established government. In most cases that have been recorded, the local authorities would have a Liberty Pole destroyed within a few days of it being erected.

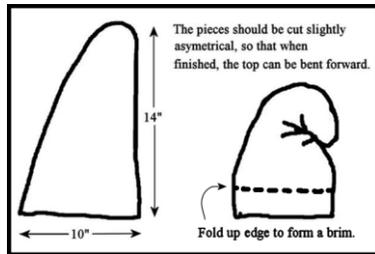
There were only two elements of the Liberty Pole: 1.) a non-descript wooden pole, and 2.) a Phrygian Cap. At times a flag, or standard, might be attached to the pole, but that was not the common practice.

The pole was most often wooden, and although sometimes available already cut, it was more than likely hewn for the purpose from a long, straight tree with a base diameter of a foot or so. The longer the pole, the better ~ twelve to sixteen feet was desirable. A tall pole might be seen by more people across fields, and therefore attract more. It would be set into a hole dug about three or four feet deep so that it would be sturdy and stand for some period of time ~ if allowed.

The cap that was placed over the top of pole was called a 'Phrygian Cap.' The placement of the cap on the top of the pole is the element that changed the piece of wood from a simple 'pole' to a 'Liberty' pole. The Phrygian cap comes

down through history from the days of the ancient Greek Empire. The kingdom of Phrygia was located in the west-central part of Anatolia, which is present-day Turkey. The Phrygian weavers made a distinctive woven cap, usually of red wool or felt. It was

conical in shape, but the two sides of the cone were not of equal length. In fact the one side was basically perpendicular to the



base line, while the other side was longer, stretching from the base line to merge with the opposite end of the shorter side. The cap usually had a turned up brim. The shorter side of the conical shape was worn toward the front of the head. The result, when worn, was that the tip of the cone would fall over, forward. The modern-day comic characters called ‘smurfs’ wear this distinctive, forward-bent cone-shaped cap.

[Although similar to the red and white ‘elf cap’ with the long pointy tip (ending in a puffy ball) that hangs down to the back, or to the side, which were worn by ‘Santa’s Elves’ at their workshop at the North Pole, the Phrygian cap was not worn with the hang-over in the backward direction, nor was it ever multi-color.]



The Phrygian cap depicted on the Seal of the United States Senate.

During the time of the ancient Greek Empire, when a slave gained his freedom, he would wear a conical shaped cap as a sign that he had gained his freedom through legal means. The original cap was called a *Pileus* cap. It was a simple cone shaped, brimless felt cap. The slave

being freed would undergo a ceremony in which he would have his head shaved and the pileus placed on his bald head. The slave would be touched on the shoulder with a rod called a vindicta, and he would henceforth be a free man. Afterward, if the freed slave did not wear the pileus cap, he ran the risk of being taken into custody and forced into slavery again. The custom became a hallmark of the ancient Roman Empire as the Roman Empire overran and assimilated the culture of the ancient Greeks. As time went on, the Phrygian cap, worn in Anatolia by the common man, became confused with the pileus. Because of that confusion, by the Middle Ages, the cap associated with freedom and liberty was the Phrygian cap. But by that time, with Europe firmly entrenched in the feudal system, the idea of the common man being able to gain control over his own life was an fanciful thought.

During the latter half of the 17th Century and into the 18th, there was a renewed interest in the culture of the ‘ancients.’ Concurrent with the ‘Roman Revival’ in the arts, more and more writers urged the overthrow of oppressive monarchical governments. And as the concept that *Liberty* actually might be within the grasp of the common man everywhere became popular, the ‘age-old’ symbols of the strife for liberty gained renewed popularity. Despite the fact that the original *pileus* was long-forgotten, its spiritual godchild, the *Phrygian cap* again became popular.

Beginning as a *personal* proclamation of liberty, the cap placed on top of the pole had become, over time, a *public* announcement of liberty and freedom.

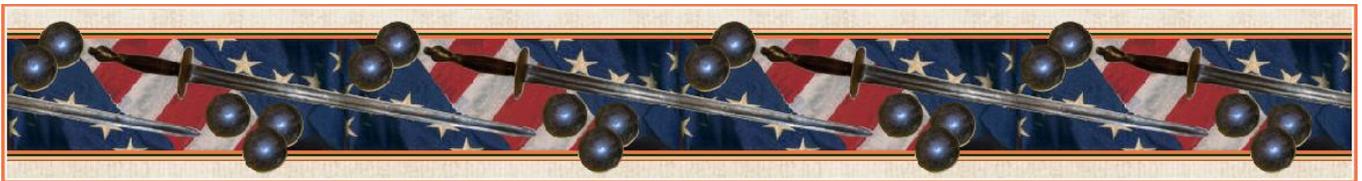
Liberty Poles, surmounted by the Phrygian cap, were raised throughout the English colonies during the American Revolutionary War. In some instances, the pole was accompanied by the raising of ‘rebel’ flags. The first such flags tended to be traditional British flags which were altered in some way. The initial alterations consisted of the addition of the words ‘liberty’ and ‘liberty and union’ to the British Red Ensign, the standard British flag flown on all British military fortified sites. White stripes were then added to the field of red to alternate as thirteen stripes, while leaving the Union Jack occupy the canton. Later flags consisting just of the alternating thirteen red and white stripes, with the Union Jack removed from

the canton, were called 'rebel stripes.' The flags were sometimes raised on a second pole, but more often they were attached to the Liberty Pole with its Phrygian cap on the top.

The French citizens, when they revolted against the House of Bourbon headed by King Louis XVI and his wife Marie Antoinette, embraced the Liberty Pole as a rallying symbol. In fact, the French people did not simply add the Phrygian cap to the Liberty Pole ~ they actually wore the cap with honor.

In America, the last instance of the widespread use of the Liberty Pole to rally like-minded rebels, was during the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794. When whiskey distillers and tavern

owners throughout the central and western counties of the state of Pennsylvania rebelled against the excise tax on spirits, they rallied their neighbors by raising liberty poles. One such incident took place in Bedford County at the Jean Bonnet Tavern. Liberty poles were raised as far east as Carlisle in Cumberland County. They were also raised to display solidarity in Franklin and Northumberland Counties and in Washington County in Maryland. Evidence has not been found for the raising of any Liberty Poles during the War of 1812, so the Whiskey Rebellion appears to have been the last rebellion by the common man to have used the pole as a rallying symbol.



## 234 Years Ago

On a foggy morning, 234 years ago on the 3rd of June, a party of Indians ambushed a company of twenty-some Bedford County Militia under the command of Captain John Boyd. Near the mouth of Sugar Run where it empties into the Beaverdam Run, in the vicinity of the present-day neighborhood of Eldorado, a band of Seneca warriors, goaded on by British Lieutenant Robert Nelles, hid along the banks of Beaverdam Run.

The third day of June in the year 1781 was a Sunday morning. Captain Boyd was responding to reports that a band of Seneca tribesmen, who had come southward from Fort Niagara, had killed two men and took one woman captive near Bedford then headed north. Boyd's militia unit set out to search for the Indian band and to possibly retrieve the woman. They rendezvoused at Fort Fetter, the fortified barn of Michael Fetter, which stood in the vicinity of present-day Wye Switches, along the south bank of Beaverdam Run. It stood on the site now occupied by the Comfort Inn. Boyd tried to get additional troops from Captain Thomas Askey's 8th Company of the Cumberland County Militia, who were garrisoning Fort Fetter

at that time, but Askey would not approve of any of his company joining the scouting party.

As Captain Boyd's men made their way northward along the stream, a war-hoop split the air, accompanied by a volley of gunfire from the British-supplied Indian warriors. The Bedford County men had little time to respond in kind. Eleven of them were killed instantly and five wounded. The survivors scrambled to take cover or escape, but ten of them were caught and taken prisoner. What some historians have called a *battle*, was not more than an engagement that was over in just a few minutes with scarcely a shot fired by the militia.

The site of this action is now occupied by a parking lot to the rear of the Sugar Run Plaza along Route 764, and east of the McLaughlin Oil and Propane company. When you are standing along the road looking at the bronze marker commemorating the 'battle', you are facing toward the hillside over which the I-99 highway stretches. The Beaverdam Run still flows along the base of that hill, at the far end of the parking lot.