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CAPT. JOHNSON MOULTON'S COMPANY.

THE FIRST TO LEAVE THE DISTRICT OF MAINE IN
THE REVOLUTION.

BY NATHAN GOULD.

Read before the Maine Historical Society, Jan. 26, 1899.

The clash of arms at Lexington,
Awoke the martial fires
That slumbered in the sturdy hearts
Of our New England sires.

MAINE, having been a part of Massachusetts during the period of the Revolutionary War, has had her history, in those trying times, overshadowed by that of the mother commonwealth. In justice to our forefathers our state's history should be preserved independently for their descendants, that they may know the services of their ancestors in the struggle for our independence.

Those who early took decisive action are of especial interest in the history of those critical hours, and will always be the pride of the towns where they lived. They were the heroes of the hour and deserve to have their names revered by the generations that will come after them.

The old town of York, without doubt, has the honor of having sent the first company of soldiers out of our state to the relief of their suffering countrymen. The Hon. David Sewall, of that town, stated in 1794, which was repeated by Williamson, in his history of Maine,

that the news of the battle of Lexington was received at York at nine o'clock in the evening of April 20, 1775, and that although no minute men had been formed in that town, a company of over sixty men were enlisted, fixed out with guns, ammunition and haversacks, with provisions for some days, and actually marched the next day, the twenty-first, and had crossed over the Piscataqua River into New Hampshire before night. They were soon sent back because their services were not then needed.

The night of the 20th of April was a stirring one in the coast towns of York and Cumberland counties. In the early evening the post rider entered old Kittery alarming the people as he passed along. It was the story that the Americans had been shot down at Lexington the day before.

You know the rest. In the books you have read,
 How the British Regulars fired and fled —
 How the farmers gave them ball for ball,
 From behind each fence and farmyard wall,
 Chasing the redcoats down the lane,
 Then crossing the fields to emerge again
 Under the trees at the turn of the road,
 And only pausing to fire and load.

It was not fear that aroused the people of Maine as the news was carried from town to town, but it was their intense indignation that England would not recognize their just rights, that she had struck the first blow and had spilled the blood of their countrymen to enforce her unfair laws. The watchfires of liberty were lighted on many a hearthstone that night,



in old Maine, as the rider was heard, above the clattering of his horse's hoofs, shouting "To arms! To arms! Avenge the lives of your brothers who have fallen at Lexington!" The ride of that courier from Kittery Point to Falmouth Neck, where he arrived before the dawn of day of the next morning, was as historic to Maine as that of Paul Revere, made famous by our Longfellow, was to Massachusetts. It fired our ancestors to action and those watchfires burned brightly until the glorious peace of 1783.

Many towns, besides York, sent forward companies of earnest patriots, ready for any service, but not living near the border of the state did not get into New Hampshire before they were turned back. They are all entitled to full praise for their spirit and patriotism, but Capt. Moulton's company must be given the honor of being the first to go beyond the boundaries of our state.

Old York was a patriotic town. As early as December 28, 1772, the inhabitants, assembled in town meeting, protested against any infringements on their rights by England, and, in January, 1774, they entered another protest. On the twenty-fourth of October, of that year, those patriots contributed to the poor of Boston 106 bushels of potatoes, 57 sheep, 4 quintals of fish, 23 cords of wood, and £1 4s. in money. On June 5, 1776, at a town meeting, they voted that should the Continental Congress declare the colonies free and independent, they would pledge their lives and fortunes to the maintenance of that declaration. Such was the spirit of the people who went themselves,

and sent their sons, at the first call heard from Lexington.

The names of those gallant men of old York have been preserved for us, and although, at this time, they served but four days before they were sent back, they are entitled to our everlasting gratitude for their spirit and resolution. Most of these men enlisted soon after their return in Col. James Scamman's 30th Regiment of Foot, and served at Cambridge in Gen. Washington's army at the siege of Boston.

The original pay-roll of Capt. Johnson Moulton's company, after nearly one hundred and twenty-four years, is in a good state of preservation, and from which the following was taken.

Pay Roll of a Company Raised by the Town of York and under the Command of Capt. Johnson Moulton Esq., April 21, 1775, as Minute Men in the Province of Massachusetts Bay.

Johnson Moulton,	Capt,
Samuel Darby,	1st Lieut.
James Donnell,	2nd "
John Trevett,	Serg't.
Joshua Trafton,	"
Josiah Parsons,	"
Edward Low,	"
Joseph Parsons,	Drummer.
Benjamin Leigh,	Fifer.

RANK AND FILE.

Amos Main	Thomas Haynes
William Grow, Jr.	Richard Dean
Josiah Moore	Henry Sayward
Ebenezer Moulton	Jotham Harris
Eliakim Hilton	Benjamin Cole
Thomas Tolpy	Jotham Donnell
Storer Sewall	John Young Junr.
Elisha Horn	Arthur Bridges
David Preble	Daniel Grant
Joseph Stanley	John Nowell Junr.
Theodore Sayward	Elisha Boyce

Abraham Sawyer
 Amaziah Goodwin
 Daniel Raynes
 Joshua Grant
 Joshua McLucas
 Jonathan Farnham
 Roger Plaisted
 Shubual Nasson
 Joseph Harris
 Joseph Simpson
 James Dempsy
 Norton Philips
 David Grant
 Daniel Lunt
 Joshua Bridges
 Spencer Perkins

Robert Bredeen
 Benja. Rogers
 Ebenezer McIntyer Junr.
 Joseph Garey
 Samuel Welch
 William Linscott
 Arthur Bragdon
 Jonathan Welch
 John Kingsbury, Junr.
 David Davis
 Samuel Garey
 Thomas Welch
 Reuben Freeman
 Abram Moore
 Jotham Harris
 Cesar (Negro)

Johnson Moulton, Capt.

Total 63 men.

The date of enlistment of the entire company is given as April 21, 1775, all were from the town of York, and each man was allowed four days' service.

The original pay-roll is in the Massachusetts Archives, in Vol. XIII, page 10.

Capt. Johnson Moulton was prominent in York and by trade was a joiner. He had been a captain in the French and Indian war, and had a brother Thomas and a sister Deborah, and they were children of Ebenezer Moulton, of York, who had land granted him by that town and had died before July 5, 1768. Capt. Moulton's first wife died August 4, 1782, her name and age, to me, unknown. He entered his intention of marriage to Mary Bragdon, October 11, 1783, whom he married, and she outlived him, dying December 23, 1794. His death occurred June 13, 1793. He left children, Johnson, jr., Elizabeth Woodbridge, and Mary. His homestead he bought of James Sayward in 1763.

Johnson Moulton made a will October 11, 1791, and said "being weak in body and not knowing how few days remains to me in this world" etc, and speaks of his "beloved wife Mary." The will was probated June 27, 1793, and the inventory of his estate was dated July 15, 1793, and amounted to £580-0-1, with a list of notes amounting to over £120. John Frost, of Kittery, was his executor, and for his and his horse's services he charged but six shillings per day. Among the articles that appear in the inventory were "gun and bayonet 12 shillings, 1 pair pistols 6 shillings, 1 pair spurs 3 shillings, 1 pair old ditto 1 shilling, hanger (sword) 3 pounds, and an esponton (a kind of halberd or pike used in the British army) 4 shillings."

Capt. Moulton, after his return from the Lexington alarm, enlisted May 2, 1775, as lieutenant-colonel in Col. James Scammon's regiment, although, he had been recommended by the militia officers of his county for the coloneley. His commission was dated May 29, 1775, and he served with that regiment at Cambridge that year. He served in the same capacity in Col. William Prescott's (he of Bunker Hill fame) 7th Continental regiment during the year 1776, serving through the siege of Boston, and then joined Gen. John Nixon's brigade in Gen. Nathaniel Greene's division, and took part in the Long Island campaign. After the war he was Sheriff of York county and served several years. In 1784 he was paid for keeping four British prisoners.

Capt. Moulton is now forgotten in the town where he lived and died. His name was barely mentioned

in the vital records of York, and but for the deeds of his land, and the probate records, we might have known little of him.

First Lieut. Samuel Darby, the name became Derby, after his service in this company, raised one for Col. Scamman's regiment, enlisting May 2, 1775, serving through that year. He commanded a company in Col. William Prescott's regiment in 1776, and joined Col. John Bailey's 2d Massachusetts regiment January 1, 1777. He was commissioned major in Lieut. Col. John Brooks' 7th Massachusetts regiment November 1, 1778, and afterwards served in Col. Michael Jackson's 8th Massachusetts regiment. He commanded a York County company at Valley Forge through the memorable winter of 1777-78, and saw much hard service. He died intestate, and Reuben Derby was appointed the administrator of his estate July 7, 1807, which was probably soon after his death. His wife's name was Mary.

Second Lieut. James Donnell entered Col. Scamman's regiment, with Capt. Darby, as his first lieutenant, and January 1, 1776, joined Col. Edmund Phinney's 18th Continental regiment, with the same rank, in Capt. Tobias Fernald's company, and was promoted to captain November 13, 1776. He enlisted January 1, 1777, as captain in Col. Samuel Brewer's 12th Massachusetts regiment and resigned from the service July 5, 1779, after over four year's service.

James Donnell served at the siege of Boston, and marched to Fort Ticonderoga in August, 1776. His company was on the fleet at Lake George in June,

1777, and was in the retreat from Ticonderoga July 7, 1777, finally arriving at Saratoga August 1. They took part in the battle of Stillwater, then at Saratoga, October 7, and witnessed Burgoyne's surrender ten days later.

Capt. Donnell's company joined Washington's army near Philadelphia and spent the winter at Valley Forge, where James Dempsey, who was a soldier in this company, broke his arm felling a tree. On June 28, 1777, they fought at Monmouth and crossed the Hudson River at King's Ferry, July 14. In August the regiment marched to Danbury, Connecticut, to guard the stores there, where they remained several weeks. In the latter part of November, under Gen. Putnam, they marched back to the Hudson River, at West Point, but the regiment was at Peekskill when Capt. Donnell resigned. His service covers the whole period of the activity of the northern army in the war, and his regiment was always to the front in every emergency.

The old town of York has much interesting history, but none shines out more brilliantly than the deeds of her gallant sons during the war of the Revolution. Their names should be blazoned on the history of our state, that their heroic sacrifices may never be forgotten.

They felt the justice of their cause ;
 And when the tempest broke,
 Though tyrants made the wrongful laws,
 God made their hearts of oak.
 No weight of years their feet could stay,
 Nor tender age restrain,
 When foreign musketry blazed forth
 O'er Concord's hallowed plain.

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