



F

104

.S6S9

Author

.....
.....

Title

.....
.....

Imprint

.....



50 570
SIMSBURY'S PART

IN THE

WAR OF THE

AMERICAN

REVOLUTION

SIMSBURY'S PART
IN THE
WAR OF THE
AMERICAN
REVOLUTION

BY
THE REV. CHAS. E. STOWE



Hartford, Conn.
Press of The Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company
M DCCC XCVI

F104
.S6S9

J. 3313

SIMSBURY'S PART

IN THE

WAR OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Simsbury may be a small place ; but Simsbury's part in the War of the Revolution is a large subject. The same sublime laws of Nature are illustrated in a drop of water falling through our atmosphere, or a world falling through space. So the study of the history of one Connecticut town during the period of the Revolution is a study of events as broad as the world, and as far-reaching as time.

The Simsbury of Revolutionary days was larger than the Simsbury of to-day by the area of the towns of Granby, East Granby, Bloomfield, and a part of the town of Canton. The original boundaries of the town were from the Farmington boundary north ten miles, and from the Windsor boundary west ten miles.

There is in existence a map of the town which was made out not far from the year 1730. The main road leading from Avon north to Salmon brook, together with the roads running easterly, appear very much as at present. The total number of houses given on this map is one hundred and sixty-two. Fifty-eight of these are within the limits of Granby as at present defined, and one hundred and four within the present limits of Simsbury. Now supposing that we allow ten persons to a house, which certainly is not a large estimate for that time of large families, the population of the town in

1730 could not have been far from sixteen or seventeen hundred persons.

They were all of English blood; children of the Magna Charta, and the Puritan England of Hampden and Cromwell. They were inured to every conceivable hardship and danger by years of conflict with savage nature and no less savage men. Far from kings' courts and standing armies and popes and bishops they had learned to govern both church and state according to the will of the majority. They were desperate fighters, sternly religious and moral, good organizers, and independent thinkers.

The first signs of trouble between the sturdy colonists of the New World and the mother country were apparent early in the French and Indian wars. It was suggested by the British ministry that the governors of the several colonies should meet, and adopt such measures as the common safety might demand. They were to draw upon the Royal treasury for all necessary expenses, which sums were to be made good by taxes laid upon the colonies by Parliament. This the colonists resented. Parliament had no right to lay taxes upon them, they maintained. If they were to be taxed by Parliament then they must be represented in Parliament. They were Englishmen and as Englishmen it was their right to be represented in the body that laid taxes upon them. Here we have the beginning of all the trouble between Great Britain and her colonies. This original proposition to tax the colonies was followed up from time to time by various oppressive measures: such as restrictions on commerce, prohibition of manufactures, and the stamp act. There was a constantly increasing irritation, culminating in the Boston Port Bill passed the seventh of March, 1774. The Port of Boston was closed to commerce by the provisions of this bill, and there was immediately an outburst of popular wrath throughout the colonies, and everywhere public meetings were held to protest against this act of tyranny. In this great popular uprising Simsbury bore her part, as the following record shows. "At a special town meeting held in Simsbury, warned by order of the

selectemen, at the usual place of holding public meetings in the said town, on Thursday the eleventh day of August, Anno Domini 1774,—Hezekiah Humphrey was chosen moderator for said meeting.

“This meeting, taking into consideration the unhappy difference and contention arisen between the British ministry and the Province of Massachusetts Bay, especially the arbitrary proceedings against the town of Boston, by the act called the ‘Boston Port Bill,’ and an armed force blocking up their harbor, stopping their trade, etc., and considering our near connections with said province, and how much our trade and interest is affected thereby, do judge ourselves loudly called upon to make the following declarations and resolves, viz.:

“That the charter privileges granted to this country by King Charles II., and transmitted to us by our virtuous predecessors, who ventured their lives and fortunes, and every desirable enjoyment to acquire, we esteem as our birth-right sacred to ourselves, and our posterity; and that none has right to disturb us in the enjoyment of them: which privileges we are determined to hold and transmit to generations to come against all opposition whatsoever.

“That as faithful and loyal subjects of his Britannick Majesty, King George III., we are ready to contribute constitutionally for the support of his royal person or government, according to our ability, yet nevertheless we judge that the Parliament of Great Britain has no legal right to lay Taxes or Duties on our persons or properties without our consent. Therefore we resolve that our brethren and friends in Boston are now suffering under the cruel hands of oppression and arbitrary government in having been condemned unheard contrary to Magna Charta and the Royal Charter which had been granted to said province.

“We therefore, from a tender feeling for the poor inhabitants of that Great Town of Boston, do judge it our duty to contribute of our substance for their relief under their present sufferings.

“Furthermore, this meeting concur and approve of a General Congress from the several colonies and plantations in North America to be convened at Philadelphia, in September next, agreeable to the resolves of several towns already published relating to a non-importation agreement from Great Britain, etc.

“We likewise concur with our neighboring towns that a harmony and correspondence be propagated and maintained between the several towns in this and neighboring colonies for their mutual advice and assistance as occasion shall call for. Therefore, Col. Jonathan Pettibone, John Owen, Esq., Col. Jonathan Humphrey, Judah Holcomb, Esq., Mr. Joel Hayes, Mr. Ashel Holcomb, Mr. Ezekiel Phelps, Oliver Humphrey, Esq., and Capt. Ames Wilcocks were chosen a committee of correspondence for the purpose aforesaid.

“This meeting further resolve that a subscription be speedily opened for all well-disposed persons to show their readiness to contribute for the relief of the poor distressed inhabitants of Boston, in such articles as each subscriber shall judge proper and their circumstances will best admit of. And the aforesaid gentlemen, the committee of correspondence, are chosen a committee to open and encourage and take in such subscriptions, and the said committee are to receive said donations and to transmit the same to the Selectmen of the Town of Boston or to such other person or persons as the Town shall appoint, taking their receipt for the same, to be improved for the purpose aforesaid.

“The foregoing passed *nemine contradicente* and to be published in the ‘Connecticut Courant.’

“Certified by

“JOHN OWEN, *Town Clerk.*”

This interesting document breathes the spirit of intelligent resistance against King George the Third's personal government which was roused throughout the colonies. September of this same year the whole country was stirred to arms by the report that the

ships of the British fleet were shelling Boston. In Connecticut alone it is estimated that at least four thousand men sprang to arms and began the march towards Boston. The men soon returned to their homes, as it proved to have been a false alarm. The incident is interesting, however, as illustrating the state of feeling throughout the country.

The alarm which came from the battlefield of Lexington, April 19, 1775, was of a more serious nature and proved to be the beginning of war in earnest. The country was plunged into a war which was to continue for eight years, draining the resources and best blood of the colonies in a desperate struggle for constitutional government.

All roads leading to Boston resounded with the tramp of armed militia marching to the relief of the town.

Shortly after the Lexington alarm three companies went from Simsbury alone. They belonged to the militia, or regular trained bands and were officered by Capt. Zaccheus Gillet, Capt. Amos Wilcox, and Capt. Lemuel Roberts; their time of service was from one to three years.

Three weeks after the battle of Lexington a company of volunteers numbering one hundred men under Capt. Abel Pettibone hastened to Boston and joined the second regiment under the command of Col. Spencer of East Haddam. This regiment marched to Boston by companies and was stationed at Roxbury, doing duty during the siege till the expiration of the term of service December, 1775.

Officers and men on detached service from this regiment fought at the battle of Bunker Hill. The officers of the Simsbury company were Abel Pettibone, Capt., Simsbury; Lieut. Amasa Mills of New Hartford, and Lieut. Nath'l Humphrey of Simsbury, and Ensign Jonathan Pettibone of Simsbury.

Immediately after the battle of Bunker Hill another company was raised and marched on to Boston under the command of Capt. Elihu Humphrey, an experienced soldier who had served under Gen. Lyman in the ex-

pedition against Havana in 1762, when the city was bombarded and captured by Admiral Pocock. Rev. Daniel Barber, in a pamphlet entitled "A History of My own Times," has given a very vivid picture of his experiences as a soldier in this company. "I enlisted under Capt. Elihu Humphrey of Simsbury. My other officers were Lieut. Andrew Hillyer, Lieut. Ebenezer Fitch Bissell, and Ensign Stoughton; all of whom are men of character and reputation. Captain Elihu, as we generally called him, was a son of honorable John Humphrey, formerly one of the Governor's council, and a justice of the Court of Common Pleas for the county of Hartford. Captain Elihu was a well-bred gentleman; his friendly turn of mind with a sweetness of disposition, secured him the love of all good men; his confidence and esteem procured him the commission of a major in the second campaign. He, dying about the close of the year 1776, left, as a legacy to his family, a name, whose reputation will not be forgotten during many generations. I knew him—I revered him—and I loved him. Lieut. Hillyer, now Col. Hillyer, was also of Simsbury. He was a handsome sprightly young gentleman, who had in early life received a college education. As an officer his manner was unassuming, gentle, and persuasive. Whenever he spoke the soldiers heard him with pleasure, and whatever was his will was cheerfully complied with. E. Fitch Bissell of Windsor was second lieutenant. He was a gentleman, though not of the most easy and familiar turn; yet for his steady correct attention to the duties of his station was well respected. I think he was advanced to a captain-ship the next year. He died many years ago. Of Ensign Stoughton I remember but little. Sickness detained him long out of camp. He was a tall, well-made man and possessed a good military appearance. He was also from old Windsor. The sergeants in this company were Aaron Pinney, Jacob Tuller, Daniel Higley, and Thomas Hayden; Jonathan Humphrey, Jr., afterwards Col. Humphrey, was clerk of the roll; all of Simsbury except Sergeant Hayden. Sergeant Pinney was a man of fierce and fiery countenance and commanding air, well becoming a soldier of '75. Sergeant Tuller was a man

from whom we did not expect much flattery ; his brow was generally knit together in a forbidding frown. Sergeant Higley, who had been a soldier in the old French war, was of a musical turn, and his old war songs made the time pass away to very good account. Sergeant Thomas Hayden was no doubt a military man; but I should guess that no soldier ever admired him for his pleasant airs. Jonathan Humphrey, clerk of the roll, was a most charming companion ; his social airs and social countenance gained the good wishes and affection of all. He is long since dead and lies buried near Major Elihu in Hop Meadow burying-ground. Our company being suddenly enlisted to the number of about seventy-five, rank and file, orders were given for all to meet on a certain day at the house of the captain, well equipped and ready to begin their march.

“The Rev. Mr. Pitkin was requested to preach that day the farewell sermon to the soldiers. At the hour appointed we marched to the meeting-house, where the officers appeared in military style, with their appropriate badges of distinction, and the soldiers in proper order, with their arms and accoutrements, as men prepared for battle. It was a full and overflowing audience, all in high expectation of hearing something new and charming from so gifted a preacher. After his warm and fervent prayer to heaven for the success of the American armies, and the liberties and freedom of our country, he introduced his address, if I remember right, from these words, ‘Play the man for your country and for the cities of your God ; and the Lord do that which seemeth him good.’ His sermon was well adapted to the occasion and the spirit of the day. It was tender and pathetic, lively and animating. . . . The sermon being ended the drums soon beat to arms. Being arranged in military order we were again conducted to the captain’s house, and dismissed for a short time.

“In going to and from the meeting-house, we were accompanied by a mixed multitude — fathers and mothers, wives and children, sisters, friends, and strangers. Now each soldier had an opportunity for mingling a few moments with his dearest friends and companions.

The tender feelings of love, of friendship, of affection, again burst forth. . . . In the midst of this mingling scene of sorrow, the drums beat to arms. 'Soldiers, take your places,' is the word; the line of march is formed; we add one more wistful, lingering look, while many a silent tear bespeaks the real feeling of the heart. The word is given, we begin our march with silent, downcast looks, and pensive feelings and reflections. . . . We marched about twelve miles that afternoon; at night put up at James Marsh's Inn. Here for the first time I slept as a soldier on the floor with a cartridge box for my pillow. At that period, horse-wagons being very little in use, an ox-team was provided to carry our provisions for the way, and a barrel of rum. Our provisions was salt pork and peas. . . . Now, for the first time, we travelled on the Lord's day, under arms, and past meeting-houses in time of public worship with drums and fifes playing martial music; all which was calculated to afford to a New England man some doubts and reflections, whether God would be as well pleased, with parade and military performance, as if we had stayed at home to read our Bibles, or went to meeting to hear the minister. But military discipline and the habits of a soldier soon affected a degree of relaxation in most of us. In process of time, many, once pious, at least in form and appearance, came into the practice of treating all days nearly alike; yet there were some who kept up the practice of reading Watts' Psalms and Hymns as a book of devotion.

"It is very natural to expect that soldiers under arms are not generally inclined to the same degree of civility as others, or as they ought to be, though this is not always the case. Yet, at the period at which I am speaking, and during our march, it was not uncommon, if a soldier thought himself not well treated by the inn-keeper, to show him resentment by shooting a ball through his sign.

"In our march through Connecticut the inhabitants seemed to view us with tokens of joy and gladness, and by them we were treated with a common civility, and

a respect due us as soldiers; but when we came to Massachusetts and advanced nearer to Boston, the inhabitants wherever we stopped seemed to have no better opinion of us than if we had been a banditti of rogues and thieves. . . . After about nine or ten days marching in company with our ox-team, loaded with our salt pork, peas, and candlestick bottoms for bread, and a barrel of rum to cheer our spirits and wash our feet, which began to be very sore by travelling, we came to Roxbury, the place of our destination. There the place of our encampment was already marked out, and a part of our regiment on the spot. For every six soldiers there was a tent provided. The ground it covered was about six or seven feet square. This served for kitchen, parlor, and hall. The green turf covered with a blanket was our bed and bedstead. When we turned in for the night we had to lie perfectly straight like candles in a box; this was not pleasant to our hip-bones and knee-joints, which often in the night would wake us, and beg to turn over. Our household utensils, altogether, were an iron pot, a canteen, or wooden bottle holding two quarts, a pail, and wooden bowl. Each had to do his own washing and take his turn at the cookery."

One of the most brilliant achievements of the war was accomplished largely by aid of the shrewdness and bravery of a Simsbury man, Gen. Noah Phelps. I refer to the capture of Fort Ticonderoga.

In April of the year 1775, several patriotic members of the General Assembly convened at Hartford to consult as to the situation.

They were convinced that they had proof that the British ministry entertained the design of making a descent on the northern colonies by the way of Quebec. In case of the execution of such a design on the part of the enemy, it was manifest that the colonists should by all means possess themselves of Crown Point and Ticonderoga, and they consequently resolved upon their capture.

To defray the expense of such an undertaking, they borrowed money from the colonial treasury on their

individual security, and appointed a committee to direct the expedition.

Mr. Bancroft, in the fourth volume of his history of the United States, page 181, gives the following account of this exploit: "The great deed, which in the meantime was achieved in the North, was planned in Connecticut and executed at her cost. Parsons, of that colony, on his way to Hartford, crossing Arnold, who was bound for Massachusetts, obtained of him an account of the state of Ticonderoga, and the great number of its brass cannon. At Hartford, on the 27th of April, Parsons, taking as his advisers Samuel Wyllys and Silas Deane, with the assistance of three others, projected the capture of the fort, and without formally consulting the assembly or the governor and council, they, on their own receipts, obtained money from the public treasury, and on the 28th sent forward Noah Phelps and Bernard Romans.

"The next day Captain Edward Mott of Preston, chairman of the Connecticut committee, followed with five associates. Ethan Allen was encouraged by an express messenger to raise men chiefly in the New Hampshire Grants. On the morning of the first of May, the party, which had grown to the number of sixteen, left Salisbury. At Pittsfield, in Massachusetts, the Connecticut party were joined by John Brown, the young lawyer of that village, by Colonel James Easton, and by volunteers from Berkshire. At Bennington they found Ethan Allen, who sent the alarm through the hills and valleys of Vermont; and on Sunday, the seventh of May, about one hundred Green Mountain boys, and about fifty soldiers from Massachusetts, under the command of Easton, rallied at Castleton. Just then arrived Arnold with only one attendant. He brought a commission from the Massachusetts committee of safety, which was disregarded; and the men unanimously elected Ethan Allen as their chief. On the ninth, the party arrived at Orwell. With the utmost difficulty a few boats were brought together, and eighty-three men with Allen, landed near Ticonderoga. The boats were sent back for Seth Warner and the

rear guard; but, if they were to be waited for there could be no surprise. The men were therefore drawn up in three ranks, and, as the first beams of morning broke upon the mountain peaks, Allen addressed them: 'Friends and fellow soldiers, we must this morning quit our pretensions to valor, or possess ourselves of this fortress; and, insomuch as it is a desperate attempt, I do not urge it on, contrary to will. You that will undertake voluntarily poise your firelock.'

"At the word, every firelock was poised. 'Face to the right,' cried Allen; and, placing himself at the head of the center file, Arnold keeping emulously at his side, he marched to the gate. It was shut, but the wicket was open. The sentry snapped a fusil at him. The Americans rushed into the fort, darted upon the guards, and, raising the Indian war-whoop, such as had not been heard there since the days of Montcalm, formed on the parade in hollow square, to face each of the barracks. One of the sentries, after wounding an officer, and being slightly wounded himself, cried out for quarter, and showed the way to the apartment of the commander. 'Come forth instantly or I will sacrifice the whole garrison,' cried Ethan Allen as he reached the door.

"At this, Delaplace, the commander, came out undressed with his breeches in his hand. 'Deliver the fort to me instantly,' said Allen. 'By what authority,' asked Delaplace. 'In the name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress,' answered Allen.

"Delaplace began to speak again, but was peremptorily interrupted; and at the sight of Allen's drawn sword near his head, he gave up the garrison, ordering his men to be paraded without arms. Thus Ticonderoga, which cost the British nation eight million sterling, a succession of campaigns, and many lives, was won in ten minutes by a few undisciplined volunteers, without the loss of life or limb." In this account, Mr. Bancroft has passed over in silence an incident in the history of the capture of Fort Ticonderoga which throws much light on that important achievement. A day or so before the events so dramatically pictured by

Mr. Bancroft transpired, Noah Phelps of Simsbury undertook the dangerous and difficult role of a spy.

He landed near the fortress, and proceeded to a tavern near by, much frequented by the British officers. A number of the younger men had a convivial drinking bout in the room next to his own, and let fall many remarks which gave important hints as to the condition of the fortress. The next day he obtained admission within the fort, was shaved by a barber attached to the garrison, and engaged one of the officers in conversation as to the condition of the fort for defense in case of a sudden attack. "Our powder is so poor," said the officer, "that we are obliged to dry and sift it before it can be used, and even then it is not to be relied on." Having gained this important piece of information Phelps was anxious to get away. The officer accompanied him to the beach where he embarked in a boat, having made an arrangement with the boatman to take him across the lake. When they were out of sight of the fort, behind a wooded point, Phelps, who was a man of prodigious strength of body took an oar and urged the speed of the boat with such frantic zeal as to excite the boatman's suspicions. The latter thought it best not to interfere with his muscular passenger, however, and arriving at his destination Phelps gave the information which led Allen to attempt the surprise which proved so successful.

The barber who shaved Phelps in the fort afterwards came to Simsbury, and in conversation said good-naturedly, "I would have cut your throat if I had known that you were a spy." It is just as well that he did not know.

In 1776, the General Assembly appointed Phelps captain of a company in a regiment about to be raised for the Continental service. Subsequently he was promoted to the rank of Major-General of militia.

A word as to the organization of the military service of the state or colony may not be out of place here.

Previous to 1739, there had been only company organizations, trained bands, as they were called; but in this year thirteen regiments were formed, and this

number was subsequently increased. In the year 1774, the eighteenth regiment was organized. It comprised the military companies of the towns of Simsbury, New Hartford, Hartland, Barkhamsted, and Colebrook. Jonathan Pettibone was appointed colonel, and Jonathan Humphrey lieutenant-colonel, both of Simsbury. The Connecticut *Courant* of 1775 contains the following: "Jonathan Pettibone, Colonel of the eighteenth regiment of militia in this colony, on receiving notice from the Continental Congress to enlist one-fourth part of the militia to be in readiness on the shortest notice for service, gave orders to the captains of his regiment to muster their men for said service as minute men. The spirit was so generous in the soldiery that a number sufficient to form three companies of sixty-eight men each, exclusive of officers, immediately enlisted, chose their officers, and were ready for any expedition on the shortest notice."

In July, 1776, the whole militia company, under the command of Capt. Job Case of Simsbury, was drafted and ordered to be in readiness at a certain time on the parade, from thence to march to New Haven and take shipping to New York. They were allowed but one day to make preparation. This company was attached to the eighteenth regiment, under the command of Col. Jonathan Pettibone. Rev. Daniel Barber, whose graphic words we have already quoted, was a soldier in this company, and has left us the following account: "The next year the war appeared much more alarming, as the British had sent out a large addition of sea and land forces. The whole country west of the Connecticut river was in alarm. The militia were called out for the defense of New York and Long Island. This was about the month of July. We took shipping at New Haven, I think the day before the battle began at Flat Bush on Long Island. From the place where we were stationed we were deafened by the loud thunder of cannon, and the cracking of small arms, and could see the smoke ascending as from a furnace.

"Our army, finding, at length, that they were not

able to hold their position, made a general and very secure retreat from Long Island to New York. Shortly after this New York was abandoned to the enemy, and, a little later, Fort Washington, with 1,800 Americans, fell into the hands of the British. Col. Jonathan Pettibone died on his return from New York. A stone erected to his memory in the Hop Meadow burying-ground reads as follows: 'In memory of Col. Jonathan Pettibone, who departed this life at Rye in the State of New York, and was buried there; at the head of his regiment at the defense of his country, Sept. 6, 1776, in the 67th year of his age.' He filled up his departments in public and private life with fidelity and honor, exhibited a bright example of the Christian virtues, and died with a firm hope of a glorious immortality."

Major Elihu Humphrey was also in the battle of Long Island, was desperately wounded, taken prisoner, and confined in the old sugar-house prison, where he was subjected to such barbarous treatment as left him shattered in health, so that after his release he returned to Simsbury only to die. His gravestone in the Hop Meadow burying-ground bears this inscription:

"In memory of Major Elihu Humphrey who died Feb. 25, 1777, in ye 39th year of his age.

'Death is a debt to nature due,
Which I have paid and so must you.'"

The eighteenth regiment, after Col. Pettibone's death, passed to the command of Col. Jonathan Humphrey, who had been the lieutenant-colonel until the death of Colonel Pettibone. March 20, 1777, the regiment contained only two companies of ninety-six men each, and was one of ten regiments sent to Peekskill under the command of Gen. Wadsworth at the request of Gen. Washington. A return from the 18th Reg. Mil., commanded by Col. Jonathan Humphrey, dated July, 1777, it appears that two hundred and sixty-four men of this regiment were in service in the Continental line. As we have stated before there were originally twenty-one companies, with an aggregate force of 1,149

men, of whom over three-fourths were from Simsbury. Col. Jonathan Humphrey was one of a committee appointed by the General Assembly, May, 1775, to take care of, and provide for officers, soldiers, and their families. He died Sept. 13, 1794.

The year 1777 was one of the darkest periods of the war. On the 18th of March, the Governor and Council of Safety of Connecticut ordered that: "The civil authority, selectmen, and military officers, and all friends to the liberties of mankind, should be requested and exhorted to exert themselves to their utmost, and that immediately as they regarded the welfare and salvation of their country, in encouraging and preparing the quotas of their respective towns to engage in said service, and encourage such enlistments." In compliance with this request a town meeting was called by the selectmen of Simsbury on the 26th of March, at which it was voted "that the present selectmen, namely, Jacob Tuller, Isaach Gillet, Capt. Ezekiel Humphrey, Richard Gay, and Capt. Samuel Hayes are chosen a committee to take care of the families of any of the soldiers who desire it, to lay out the money such soldiers shall deposit in their hands to purchase provisions and other necessaries for such families at ye prices stated by law, agreeable to the requisition of the Governor and Council of Safety.

"It is also recommended by this meeting to said selectmen to see what money they can get by subscriptions and donations to encourage soldiers to enlist in the Continental army."

On the 12th of September the Governor and Council of Safety resolved: "That each town in the state should be requested as soon as might be to convene and make provision as should seem best to procure immediately one shirt or more if they saw fit, either linen or woolen; one hunting shirt or frock, one pair of woolen over-alls, one or two pair of stockings, and one pair of shoes for each non-commissioned officer in the Continental army who might belong to such town."

Prices of all imported goods were enormously increased by the embargo which suppressed importa-

tion, and monopoly which raised the prices on such goods as were already in the country. To remedy this evil the General Assembly passed laws regulating the prices of goods and of labor. The price fixed on salt was ten shillings per bushel. The scarcity of this necessity of life became so great that the General Assembly to prevent monopoly passed an act "empowering the Civil authority and Selectmen of the several towns, upon application, to cause the stores of any engrosser or monopolizer of salt, within their respective towns, to be opened, seized, and distributed among the inhabitants, who should need it, at the price fixed by law." No family was permitted to receive over half a bushel.

At length the supply of salt was exhausted and the distress was so great as to threaten the peace and safety of the state. The Governor and Council of Safety therefore ordered the impressment of a number of vessels to be fitted out and protected by an armed ship to purchase salt for the state of Connecticut. The salt thus obtained was deposited with agents for distribution to towns and individuals.

At a town meeting held in Simsbury, Dec. 1, 1777, it was voted: "That the respective school committeemen in the several societies in this town, and in the respective districts, are directed to exhibit an account of the number of inhabitants, that is of each family, and to exhibit the said number as soon as may be to the present selectmen, in order that the town's salt may be equally divided."

Shortly before this time Mr. Daniel Barber, a resident of Simsbury, started out in search of salt for his family, fortified with the following document:

HARTFORD COUNTY, SIMSBURY, Oct. 14, 1777.

These certify that Mr. Daniel Barber, the Bearer, has taken the oath of fidelity to these states, and that he has lately hired a man into the Continental service, and I never knew that he behaved unfriendly to these states. Please let him pass and repass as long as he behaves friendly to these states.

Per JOHN OWEN, *Justice of the Peace.*

On November fifteenth, 1777, "articles of confederation and perpetual union" were adopted by the Continental Congress, to be submitted for approbation to the several states. Of this act Bancroft says, Vol. V., page 208: "The system was imperfect, and was acknowledged to be imperfect. A better one could not then have been accepted; but with all its faults it contained the elements for the evolution of a more perfect union. The sentiment of nationality was forming. The framers of the confederacy would not admit into that instrument the name of the people of the United States, and describe the states as so many sovereign and independent communities; yet already in the circular letter of 1777 to the states, asking their several subscriptions to the plan of confederacy, they avowed the purpose to secure to the inhabitants of all the states an 'existence as a free people.' The child that was then born was cradled between opposing powers of evil; if it will live, its infant strength must strangle the twin serpents of separatism and central despotism."

At a town meeting held in Simsbury the twelfth day of January, Anno Domini 1778, Colonel Noah Phelps was chosen chairman, and "after reading the Articles of Confederation drawn up and adopted by the Continental Congress of the United States of North America, and recommended by the General Assembly of this state to the consideration of the towns, voted to consider this Confederation article by article, and after considering the same to the 8th article, voted to adjourn this meeting to the 19th day of January instant, to meet at this place at 10 o'clock in the morning.

"And on Monday the 19th day of January, 1778, this meeting was opened according to the adjournment. Col. Noah Phelps continued Moderator; voted, to adopt and concur with all the articles of Confederation aforementioned, and John Owen, Daniel Humphrey, and Mr. Andrew Hillyer were chosen and appointed a committee to transmit the doings of this meeting to the General Assembly of this state in their present sessions.

"Voted, that the vote passed in this town at a town meeting on the twenty-ninth of September last to make

an addition to the soldiers' wages shall be now stopped, and to continue in force no longer. . . . Voted, the remaining salt belonging to the town shall be distributed to the soldiers' families and widows, at the discretion of the selectmen.

"This meeting is dissolved by vote."

The following extract from the records bears testimony to the energy and liberality with which the town stood by its soldiers at the front during the desperate conflict.

"At a special town meeting held in Simsbury at the meeting-house in the first society in said town on the 16th day of June, A.D. 1780, Colonel Jonathan Humphrey was chosen moderator of said meeting; voted, that there shall be paid out of said town-treasury for the encouragement of soldiers that have enlisted since the first day of March last, or shall inlist into the Continental, or this state's service belonging to this town's quota, shall have for their encouragement paid as aforesaid as a premium the sum of twelve shillings per month for each soldier in said service for so long a time each soldier shall serve, at any time between said first day of March last until the first day of January next, and this encouragement to extend to the non-commissioned officers according to their rank in office.

"Also voted, that each non-commissioned officer, according to their rank, and each private soldier belonging to this town's quota or regiment, that have enlisted, or are taken into the public military service, from the first of March last, or that shall be employed in said service till the first day of January next, shall have for their wages for each month any such officer or soldier shall be employed as aforesaid, forty shillings, to be estimated as wheat at four shillings per bushel, for the term they shall be in said service, and that if what is allowed to them by the state or Congress shall fall short of said sum, the remainder shall be paid out of this town's treasury, so that their monthly wages shall be sufficient to purchase ten bushels of wheat, whether it be paid in silver, Connecticut State's money, or Continental,

and that said premium and bounty shall be estimated and paid in the same manner."

At a town meeting held in Simsbury, Anno Domini 1780, Capt. Ezekiel Humphrey was chosen moderator of said meeting. Voted, "to raise a rate of 16d on the pound, to be paid either in provisions, or provisions at the stipulated prices according to the late act of the General Assembly of this State at their last session, or in silver or gold coyn, to be laid out in purchasing a Magazine of provisions for the Continental army; also voted to chuse a committee to purchase and receive and store said provisions and appoint the places where to receive and store the same, and the present selectmen are chosen a committee for the purpose aforesaid. . . .

"Voted, to chuse a committee to class the inhabitants of said town according to their respective lists agreeable to the act of the General Assembly, in order to raise the quota of Continental soldiers belonging to this town to fill up the army for three years, or during the war."

The 19th day of October, 1781, Lord Cornwallis surrendered a British army of seven thousand men at Yorktown, Virginia, and the war was practically at an end. The town records of Simsbury show her "Civil Authority and Selectmen" to have met with no little difficulty in holding out as they did grimly to the end.

"At a lawful town meeting of the inhabitants of the town of Simsbury held by adjournment on the fifteenth day of February, 1781, Capt. Ezekiel Humphrey continued moderator of said meeting.

"Proposed to vote whether the Town will excuse Jedidiah Case from paying his proportion to hire a Continental soldier in the class he belongs to. Negatived. Eseck Allin in the same class; Negatived.

"Voted, that Prime Stores, and Prime Stores Jun. & Rogers refusing to pay their proportion in hiring a Continental soldier in the class they belong to, shall be doomed to pay to said class double of their said proportion according to law.

"Voted, that David Edwards, Isaach Eno, Jared

Merrill & Martin Humphrey, Thomas Barber 2nd, Robert Mason, and Thomas Barber 3rd, and John Pike, they and each of them, each of them refusing to pay their proportion in procuring Continental soldiers in their respective classes in which they belong, shall be and are now doomed to pay double sums to their respective classes, as assigned to them, and to be collected as the law directs." One reads between the lines here a rebellion of some magnitude sternly suppressed by King Democracy.

Simsbury of that day seems to have been an independent self-governing Republic. One of the great powers of the world, in fact, examining with critical severity the doings of kings and congresses.

"At a special Town meeting of the inhabitants of Simsbury legally warned held in the first society in the town on the 12th day of November, A.D. 1787, Captain Elisha Graham was chosen moderator of the meeting.

"Noah Phelps and Daniel Humphrey, Esq., were chosen delegates for the Convention of the State of Connecticut, to convene in Hartford, in the County of Hartford on the first Thursday of January next. And it was proposed to and taken into consideration by said meeting, it would be advantageous to this and other United States of America to adopt the new constitution agreed upon by the Federal Convention lately held at Philadelphia; and after deliberating on the subject it was voted by said meeting that it was the sense and opinion of the same that to adopt the proposed constitution would institute and erect an aristocracy which they fear would end in despotism and tyranny, and extinguish or nearly absorb our ancient charter priviledges ever sacred and dear to us, and instead of lessening our taxes and burdens it would greatly increase and augment them and finally prove destructive of our most valuable liberties and priviledges, therefore this meeting do instruct their delegates to the convention, of the State of Connecticut to be convened at Hartford on the first

Thursday of January next, to use their endeavour to oppose the adoption of said constitution it is now proposed."

It is a matter of fact that one of the delegates though voting as instructed by the town, took occasion to state that his personal convictions led him to favor the proposed constitution.

This is but after all an inadequate and meagre sketch of Simsbury's Part in the War of the Revolution. The heroic struggles of brothers, husbands, and fathers at the front were equaled by what the brave women went through with on the farms and in the households, frequently doing the work of men out-of-doors and the work of women within. It was not an uncommon thing for the women to plough, plant, reap, and gather into barns, slaughter hogs, and salt down the meat.

Life went on with its loves, hates, hopes, and fears. Lovers whispered over garden walls or sat hand in hand before the blaze of winter fires. Mothers sang their babies to sleep, then spun and sewed for the husband and father at Valley Forge or Trenton. Misers counted their gold, and the parsons wrote and preached their sermons.

The heroic and romantic were not so apparent then as now. The war cost many precious lives and much hard-earned money. Yet there was a heroic and romantic side. Men love liberty more than leisure, and prefer death to disgrace. There is the same heroism and the same grim determination sleeping in the hearts of New England men and women to-day. It flashed out during the dark days of the late Civil War, and may illumine the gloom of darker days to come.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 076 312 3

