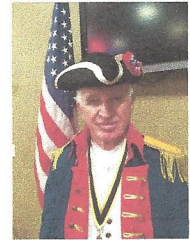




The American Revolution

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Sons of the American Revolution

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The Militia,

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Every colony in colonial America had a citizen-soldier militia, because every colony in colonial America had large populations of Native American neighbors, who were not always friendly neighbors. Major Hoyt relates a story from his family's oral history that has his eighth generation great grandfather, John Hoyt, as a Selectman on the Salisbury, Massachusetts, town council. The council agreed that the community needed to expand across the Merrimac River into Native American territory.

Frontiersman Hoyt and eight other families formed the expansion party. This new settlement became Amesbury, Massachusetts, which was successfully established, because of its militia efforts between 1614 and 1688. During the 1760's, England was at war with France and the French had great influence among the Native American tribes of colonial America. France was able to enlist fierce Native American support in its war with Britain here on American soil. This is why the "Seven Years War" was referred to in North America as "The French and Indian War." The citizen-soldier militias of colonial America played a major role in the campaigns of this war. Major Hoyt relates another family oral history account of these times in which, his fifth generation great aunt, Betsy

Hoyt, as a pretty young maiden, was attending to her milking chores, a duty performed, while under the security of a handsome young militiaman. She is reputed to have said to this young man, "You need to spend more time looking out for Indians and less time watching me milk cows." No sooner spoken, when an Indian emerged from the surrounding woods, whereupon the young militiaman turned and appropriately dealt with the crisis at hand, thus ending the episode. The year was 1738.

Who were these citizen-soldiers making up colonial militias? They were every available male between the ages of 16 and 60. All were subject to service in local militias. They were farmers, carpenters, blacksmiths, coopers as in the case of Edward Hollis, tavern keepers, like John Hollis, and plantation owners like George Fairfax, William Fitzhugh, and George Washington. These citizen-soldiers were self-equipped and most likely to be clothed as ordinary citizens, i.e., without actual military uniforms. Just how did these citizen-soldiers perform?

Militia soldiers performed military duties in order to preserve tranquility and keep the frontier peace. When these militiamen were on duty, they would often be accompanied by regular British soldiers, dressed in bright red uniforms. A militiaman would invariably have a haversack (Backpack today), which contained any extra clothing, hand-carved wooden utensils, and dried, non-perishable food items. In addition, he would have a sealed cow horn filled with black powder, a shot pouch filled with lead shot, and this pouch would have a dry pocket for new flints. Just about all militiamen had broad, strong, leather belts worn about their midsections, and from which dangled a large, heavy, leather-sheathed, knife or hand axe. To be continued.