

Independence fighting Revolutionary War veterans from the Oxford Hills

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By Nicole Carter

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IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.
A DECLARATION
 BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
 IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.

WHEN in the Course of human Events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the Separation.

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient Causes; and accordingly all Experience hath shewn, that Mankind are more disposed to suffer, while Evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the Forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long Train of Abuses and Usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a Design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their Right, it is their Duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future Security. Such has been the patient Sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the Necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The History of the present King of Great-Britain is a History of repeated Injuries and Usurpations, all having in direct Object the Establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid World.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public Good.
 He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing Importance, unless suspended in their Operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the Accommodation of large Districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the Right of Representation in the Legislature, a Right inestimable to them, and formidable to Tyrants only.

He has called together legislative Bodies at Places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the Depository of their public Records, for the sole Purpose of fatiguing them into Compliance with his Measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly Firmness his Invasions on the Rights of the People.
 He has refused for a long Time, after such Dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise, the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the Dangers of Invasion from without, and Convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the Population of these States; for that Purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their Migrations hither, and raising the Conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the Tenures of their Offices, and the Amount and Payment of their Salaries.

He has erected a Multitude of new Offices, and sent hither Swarms of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their Substance.

He has kept among us, in Times of Peace, Standing Armies, without the Consent of our Legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a Jurisdiction foreign to our Constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For quartering large Bodies of Armed Troops among us;

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from Punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States;

For cutting off our Trade with all Parts of the World;

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent;

For depriving us, in many Cases, of the Benefits of Trial by Jury;

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended Offences;

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an arbitrary Government, and enlarging its Boundaries, so as to render it at once an Example and fit Instrument for introducing the same absolute Rule into these Colonies;

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments;

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with Power to legislate for us in all Cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our Seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our Towns, and destroyed the Lives of our People.

He is, at this Time, transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to complete the Works of Death, Desolation, and Tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty and Perfidy, scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous Ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized Nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the Executioners of their Friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic Insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the Inhabitants of our Frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known Rule of Warfare, is an undistinguished Destruction, of all Ages, Sexes and Conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions we have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble Terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated Injury. A Prince, whose Character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the Ruler of a free People.

No man have we been wanting in Attention to our British Brethren. We have warned them from Time to Time of Attempts by their Legislature to extend an unwarrantable Jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the Circumstances of our Emigration and Settlement here. We have appealed to their native Justice and Magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the Ties of our common Kindred to disavow these Usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our Connections and Correspondence. They too have been deaf to the Voice of Justice and of Consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the Necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of Mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace, Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the World for the Rectitude of our Intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly Publish and Declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES; that they are absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political Connection between them and the State of Great-Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which INDEPENDENT STATES may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honour.

Signed by ORDER and in BEHALF of the CONGRESS,

JOHN HANCOCK, PRESIDENT.

ATTEST.
 CHARLES THOMSON, SECRETARY.

PHILADELPHIA: PRINTED BY JOHN DUNLAP.

One of the rarest objects in the Maine Historical Society collection is a John Dunlap print of the Declaration of Independence. *Collections of Maine Historical Society, courtesy of MaineMemory.net, item #34722*

OXFORD HILLS — With much of Oxford Hills missing out on Independence Day events it is appropriate to consider some of the figures who made American independence possible, fighting for it during the American Revolution. After the war, dozens of veterans made their way east to settle the Maine frontier and make their marks on the fledgling nation. Here are the stories of three different war veterans who took different paths to the area and became part of its lore.

Norway

Jacob Frost, who settled in Norway in 1800, was one of those soldiers whose legend is true but included at least a token of embellishment that took root through the years.

A native of Tewkesbury, Mass, Frost was a soldier with the colonial army that met British troops at the Battle of Bunker Hill. After being wounded in the hip by a musket ball he was captured and imprisoned at Fort Halifax. Despite receiving little medical attention and with the bullet lodged in his hip, Frost and three fellow Americans managed to remove a stone from the wall of their prison cell and dig their way out beneath it.

Although one man was unfortunately too large to squeeze through the escape tunnel, Frost and two of his comrades began making their way west towards Massachusetts. Their plan to evade recapture was to travel under cover of darkness and hide during daylight hours. The still injured Frost was concealed by the other two soldiers with leaves under a blown down tree while they hid separately.

As Frost nestled in his makeshift blind, a group of British soldiers dispatched to recover the escaped prisoners sat on the very tree he was hidden under, discussing their orders and likely providing details that allowed the Americans to evade them once the sun set.

The trio had received little to eat in prison and so saved almost no rations ahead of their escape; hunger was at times the most dangerous threat they faced. Stopping at one farm, the most they could pilfer was an old shoe which they tore into shares and chewed. Frost is to have said the leather was the sweetest morsel he ever ate.

Occasionally they managed to rustle up a hen out of a barn but as DownEast Maine was largely inhabited by Tories, colonists loyal to England, they dared not build fires for cooking and ate their meals raw.

One day they dared knock on a colonist's door to beg for food. Against the odds, the woman of the house invited them in to hastily eat and take more food with them before her husband returned, certain that he would turn them over to the Tory authorities.

In 1800 when Frost traveled north, this time immigrating from Massachusetts to Norway, he carried with him a cannon ball inscribed with his name and that of Bunker Hill, where he presumably recovered it from. That ball is now in the collections housed at the Norway Historical Society.

"The cannon ball is attributed to Jacob Frost," says Susan Denison, curator for the historical society. "We also know darn well that he didn't take it Halifax with him, although it's possibly true it was from Bunker Hill.

"It was at the Norway Library for years and years, I remember it as a kid. It's probably a cannon ball from that era and maybe it came from Bunker Hill. That it was a souvenir taken by Jacob Frost is unlikely, because we know what happened to him."

There was, however, one souvenir that Frost certainly carried from Boston to Halifax, back to Massachusetts and then finally to Norway. And that is the musket ball that put him out of the battle and into enemy hands during the Battle of Bunker Hill. The bullet had been left in his hip since 1775 and was only removed in the 1830s, a few years before he died.

Paris

Isaac Bolster came to Paris with his family in 1784. Born in Uxbridge, Mass. on April 27, 1825, Bolster's first military service came in the 1750s during the French and Indian Wars. Not much is known about his role in the colonial militia then. He married Mary Dwinell in 1761; the couple had their first child the same year.

More is known about Bolster's time in the Continental Army during the American Revolution, thanks in part to a soldier he recruited as the war began in April 1775, Samuel Bixby. Bixby kept a diary of his time in Capt. Bolster's regiment, providing glimpses into happenings during the next several months.



A cannon ball from the Battle of Bunker Hill carried from Massachusetts to Norway by Revolutionary War veteran Jacob Frost. *Nicole Carter / Advertiser Democrat*

Bixby's entry of June 17, 1775 indicates that Bolster's troops were not engaged when the colonists clashed with the British Army at Bunker Hill. Stationed at Roxbury, Bixby makes note of General George Washington arrival on July 5. At that time Bolster's unit was engaged in building fortifications in case of an enemy attack.

Late that summer tragedy struck Bolster's family when three of his seven children all died within two days of one another.

According to family accounts, Bolster reenlisted in 1776, serving that year in the New York Campaign where Washington struggled to keep his army intact while attempting to wrest a superior enemy from its stronghold of New York City.

By 1780 Bolster was focused on business ventures, acquiring land in Oxford and Hebron, Maine and settling there with his family in 1784. His last and 11th child, Solomon, was born in Paris in 1789. Only three of his children would outlive him, Abraham (second, born 1763), Deacon Isaac (fifth, born 1769) and David (10th, born 1782).

Bolster was also involved with local politics, serving as selectman and allying himself with the region's proprietors. He was among those who opposed Paris incorporating as its own town, which was granted in 1793 by the faraway state government in Massachusetts.

As a Paris resident, Bolster made his living as a trader and operated a store/tavern. His account books during the 1790s listed products like rum, rice, fish, wine, salt, tea, scythes, molasses, sugar and spices.

After Bolster's wife Mary died in 1814 he remarried to Aphia Stephens Smith of Turner. Little of Aphia's life is recorded but their marriage was also her second. She had married Seba Smith in 1788; their son of the same name would become one of Maine's early noted humorists.

When he died on April 27, 1825 Aphia was granted \$800 from debts owed to Bolster by others, indicating that he was also in the loan business.

Bolster's will also stated that Aphia would receive from his estate: "...I give her all my household furniture and her own wearing apparel, also one cow; also I give her the wool of five sheep so long as she shall remain single ... also I give her the use of my horse and chaise and harness and my sleigh and harness so long as she shall remain single, also I give her the use of my bridle and side saddle..."

The bulk of his estate seems to have been distributed among his three surviving sons.

While it is not known what motivated Bolster to place future conditions on his widow's inheritance, it did not motivate her to mourn his death very long; by November of 1825 Aphia Stephens Smith Bolster married her third husband, John S. Carey of Leeds.

As one of the town's early residents, Bolster put an influential stamp on Paris through community leadership, real estate and business dealings, and the generations of Bolsters to come.

Norway

Born in 1759 (with the last name "Buck"), Samuel Ames was 16 years old at the start of the American Revolution. He served in the conflict for one year, as a drummer in Col. Wesson's Ninth Massachusetts Regiment in Saratoga, NY.

While some of the Revolutionary War veterans who found their way to Norway following the war had more dramatic narratives, such as Jacob Frost or Lemuel Shedd, who acted as a body guard to General George Washington and carried his messages to General Horatio Gates during the campaign that saw British General John Burgoyne surrender to Gates' army in 1777, Ames made substantial contributions that helped the Norway community solidify and grow.

Ames moved to Norway from Paris in 1789, just a few years after the town's original settlers began clearing what was then known as "Rustfield" and named for its founding developer, George Rust of Salem, Mass.

Ames is said to have been the first miller of the community; built the first "habitation" in the village and also the town's first wagons. Ames is listed as a founder of the Universalist Church that formed in 1799 and incorporated in 1805. His legend states that it was he who beat the first drum ever heard in Norway.

Ames could also possibly claim the title of Norway's first conservationist. Outdoor enthusiasts today have him to thank for [Norway's ancient open space gem, Ordway Grove](#). Ames purchased the property when he moved to Norway and acted as protector and steward for its stand of pines, some of which may date from the end of the 17th century and have recorded heights approaching 140 feet and girths of 11 feet.

Ames held onto the property for the rest of his life. After he died in 1852 it was eventually sold to John A. Ordway who held title to it until the 1880s. The forest then changed hands several times, often at risk of being lumbered and also rejected by the town of Norway for a park space during the 1920s.

In 1931 the last 10 acres of Ordway Grove was rescued by an anonymous buyer who then donated it to Norway's Twin Town Nature Club, where it remains protected and open to the public.

Ames also provided first-person accounts to David Noyes near the final days of his life as the latter compiled the first history of Norway.

He passed away in Greenwood on August 23, 1852.

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Norway's first residence, built by Samuel Ames around 1789, after it was moved to the property of Herbert Walker. *Courtesy Norway Historical Society*