



WOMPATUCK NEWS

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Lester Gammon posing as a Revolutionary War British Grenadier.



Hingham Town Hall painting of General Benjamin Lincoln.



General Benjamin Lincoln's grave behind The Old Ship Church in Hingham.

The British Are Coming! The British Are Coming!

By Jim Rose, FOW News Editor and Historian

At ease!!! Just kidding! So put away your muskets and Daisy BB guns. It's just Park Director Steve Gammon's brother Lester faking it. Lester happens to perform as a reenactor for a Revolutionary War British brigade.

As FOW members honor Patriot's Day every year, few realize what local connections park employees have to our colonial past.

Steve Gammon's mother Dorothy's side of the family, surname Bates, arrived at the South Shore in the 1600s not long after the Pilgrims landed.

Here is what Lester says about his reenacting role and the family history:

"I portray a Grenadier in His Majesty's 1st Foot Guards in service as the Brigade of Guards who fought in the Colonies in the American War for Independence. While it may seem a bit odd that I am a member of a British re-created unit what with some of my forebears being Rebels (or Patriots!) back in the day, it is not totally down the wrong street. My Bates relatives aside, I am also related to Loyalists who were driven from this country and

had to re-establish themselves in Nova Scotia. It is estimated that 30 percent of the Colonial population remained loyal to the Crown, 20 percent were undecided and the rest desirous for Independence. Even on the South Shore, some towns were more loyalist leaning than others.

"Today, to make re-enactments work we need both sides represented.

"The 1st Foot Guards are known today as the Grenadier Guards. In the 18th century they would have been considered the King's Body Guards or Palace Guards, without a doubt the most prestigious service in the British Army. There were three Guards (2nd or Coldstream and 3rd or Scots Guards being the other two) Regiments at the time and 1/3 of each Regiment was drafted to create a Brigade of Guards to serve in America to help subdue the Rebellion. The Brigade landed in New York in 1776 and fought along the East Coast until the termination of hostilities. It was Charles O'Hara of the Guards who offered the sword of surrender to Hingham's Benjamin Lincoln at Yorktown, Virginia in 1781.

"A regiment of Foot in the latter 18th Century was divided into three sections. In line of battle, there were two flank companies (each near 100 men). On the left would be the light infantry, smaller, active men who would be skirmishers or used for rapid assaults. The center would be filled by eight companies of the regular battalion soldiers, known as 'hatmen', typically wearing the well known bi-corn hat. On the right would be the Grenadier Company. Up until the time of the Revolution, British Grenadiers carried upon them, grenades, lit with a smoldering fuse, and hurled at fortifications. In an effort to keep their hats from being knocked off, a tall hat was designed so as not to be knocked askew in the throwing motion. Eventually this hat became the famous bearskin, and retained to make a soldier seem even larger (to be a grenadier a man was required to be six feet tall and fit) to impress the enemy. Grenades, however, were phased out by 1776 as being too dangerous to the grenadier and not very much so to the enemy.

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Old Scituate Lighthouse and the “Army of Two” marker.



Abraham Lincoln’s ancestor Samuel Lincoln’s house on North Street, Hingham.



Monument of Abraham Lincoln in park next to North Street, Hingham.

“The Grenadiers were used as shock or assault troops. Since a battle was usually won by the bayonet rather than the fired musket ball, the Grenadiers were an important asset to an 18th Century military unit.

“Revolutionary War re-enacting in the Bay State is very active throughout the year. April is, of course a very busy time. Minuteman National Historic Park will host “Battle Road” Saturday, April 17, followed by a re-created version of the retreat to Boston at Tower Park, Lexington, in the afternoon. On April 19 just before dawn, on Lexington Green, thousands will witness the “Shot Heard Round the World”, the only choreographed re-enactment that can be accurately produced since such copious records are available of whom was where on the fateful morning. On the 4th of July weekend, the Guards will be at Harborfest in Boston, this year in a major production and encampment in Boston Common. Look for the Guards in the Hingham Parade as well!”

One of the Bates family’s biggest claim to fame traces back to the “Army of Two” during the War of 1812.

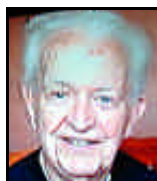
In 1814, a British naval raiding party were tricked into retreat by 15-year-old Abigail and 21-year-old Rebecca Bates playing a fife and drum loudly from the Scituate Lighthouse. The Brits were fooled with an impression of a superior force of town militia waiting to over-

whelm them. They quickly made haste.

Rebecca was quoted in a magazine about their ruse many years later:

“I’ll tell you what I’ll do,” says I to my sister. ‘Look here, you take the drum and I’ll take the fife.’ I was fond of military music and could play four tunes on the fife. Yankee Doodle was my masterpiece. ‘What good’ll that do?’ says she. ‘Scare them,’ says I. “All you got to do is call the roll. I’ll scream the fife and we must keep out of sight; if they see us they’ll laugh us to scorn.”

The Bates family served in all our country’s wars starting with the Native American King Philip War of 1676.



Lester Gammon Sr. In World War II, Steve Gammon’s father Lester fought the Nazis in the Battle of the Bulge. His anti-aircraft unit was one of the first troops to cross the Rhine River at the bridge of Remagen, Germany despite coming under intense fire from artillery, Stuka dive bombers, and ME-262 jets.



Ruth Todd Steve Gammon’s aunt Ruth Todd, *nee* Bates, was recently featured in the last FOW Newsletter for her dedicated work in the Administration Building at the Hingham Naval Ammunition Depot during World War II.

Besides Steve Gammon’s patriotic family background, Larry Lincoln, who was



Larry Lincoln

Wompatuck’s first supervisor in 1968, worked for the park in purchasing for 44 years. Now retired, he can trace his family to the founding of Hingham in the early 1600s.

Once a year, the town hosts Lincoln Day in honor of General Benjamin Lincoln, a hero of the American Revolution and Abraham Lincoln, our 16th President.

Larry Lincoln is a descendant of General Benjamin Lincoln and is Abraham Lincoln’s 32nd cousin.

Larry’s grandfather Elija first owned and operated the spring at the park in the late 1800s and early 1900s and his father’s first cousin Isiah Lincoln worked at the Hingham Naval Ammunition Depot as a machinist during World War II. Isiah was honored by the Navy for his inventions to increase ordnance production.

Reflecting back on his service at the park, Larry Lincoln says, “I loved working at the park. The department has always been good to me. I loved working with the people. It was a great experience. The Bureau Chief of Recreation said I was an icon in the department. That’s a compliment I will always take with me.”

Bates and Lincolns have built a proud legacy of service and sacrifice to the founding and cultivation of not only to the towns of Scituate and Hingham, but also to our nation. ■