

**HISTORY OF COLONEL EDMUND
PHINNEY'S THIRTY-FIRST
REGIMENT OF FOOT. HISTORIAN
MAINE SOCIETY SONS OF THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

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History of Colonel Edmund Phinney's Thirty-First Regiment of Foot. Historian Maine Society
Sons of the American Revolution by Nathan Goold

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NATHAN GOOLD

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HISTORY OF COL. EDMUND PHINNEY'S 31ST REGIMENT OF FOOT.

THE FIRST REGIMENT RAISED IN THE COUNTY OF CUMBERLAND
IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

BY NATHAN GOOLD.

LONGFELLOW wrote — “ War is a terrible trade; but in the cause that is righteous sweet is the smell of powder.”

The Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, February 4, 1775, resolved to purchase munitions of war for fifteen thousand men, and April 23, 1775, it was unanimously resolved to raise thirteen thousand, six hundred men, and other New England colonies were invited to raise their proportionate quota to make the aggregate of thirty thousand, and in a few days that number was enrolled. So many came that the generals were obliged to send many back to their homes. On May 20, 1775, Artemas Ward was commissioned general and commander-in-chief of the colony.

Col. James Scammon's York County Regiment marched soon after the beginning of the war, and joined the army at Cambridge, but Cumberland County sent no regiment until July, for reasons which will hereafter be fully explained.

Col. Edmund Phinney's 31st Regiment of Foot, was the first regiment raised in the County of Cumberland for service in the field, in the Revolutionary war. Most of the men equipped themselves, but those who

were not able were supplied by the towns where they enlisted. A large part of the men enlisted soon after the receipt of the news of the commencement of the war, and were in the service in and about Falmouth until July.

When Capt. John Parker formed his minute men on Lexington Common in the early morning of April 19, 1775, he may have realized the responsibility that rested on his company. They represented the forbearance of the colonists, and they, by not firing the first gun, established in the minds of the American people, the character of the men who first resisted British oppression. A boulder now marks the line of this company, on that eventful morning, inscribed with Capt. Parker's order to his men:—

Stand your ground.
Don't fire unless fired upon.
But if they mean to have war
let it begin here.

The war then had actually begun. The news reached the town of York on the evening of April 19, and Capt. Johnson Moulton collected his company of over sixty men, from that old town, and marched on the morning of the next day towards Boston, making fifteen miles and crossing the ferry over Piscataqua River before night. This was the first company that marched from the Province of Maine in war of the Revolution.

The first information of the battles of Lexington and Concord reached Falmouth Neck before daylight of April 21, and created much consternation and alarm.

That day Capt. John Brackett's company marched towards Boston, followed by companies under command of captains Hart Williams, Wentworth Stuart, Abraham Tyler, and probably others from Cumberland County. These were the militia then organized for any immediate service. They proceeded as far as Wells, about thirty miles, when they were ordered to return home to guard the exposed towns on their own seacoast. They arrived at Falmouth, April 24, and were allowed five days' service.

Arrangements were immediately made to form a regiment for active service and the business of enlisting the men was commenced. About two weeks later, before the men were all enlisted in this regiment, occurred what was called "Thompson's war," which lasted several days. Capt. Mowat and his surgeon were captured (May 9) at Falmouth Neck by Col. Samuel Thompson's "Spruce" company of about fifty men, from Brunswick. Mowat was released on parole, to return the next morning, by the timid and Tory influence of the Neck, but did not keep his promise. Before the release it is stated the Tories were for the militia of the Neck to rescue the prisoners from Thompson's men.

Col. Phinney was in town and the soldiers of his regiment assembled before the next morning, and were "highly enraged" at finding that Mowat had been released. This whole affair evidently was planned by Col. Thompson, and probably his company arrived on the Neck before they were expected by Phinney's men, who were to assist in capturing Mowat's vessel.

The Gorham and Windham soldiers in their indignation sacked Capt. Coulson's house, as he was the most prominent Tory, and used it for a barrack. In the cellar they found a barrel of New England rum, which he had put in for his own use, and it is stated that "they made so free with it that some of them were quite and others *almost* drunken." Calvin Lombard of Gorham, who, "raised" with some of this liquor, went to the foot of the street and fired a brace of balls into the side of Mowat's vessel, probably is entitled to the credit of firing the first gun at Falmouth in the Revolution. He did not belong to the regiment but probably came with them from Gorham. He was the youngest son of Rev. Solomon Lombard, the first minister of Gorham, a graduate of Harvard College, member of the Provincial Congress and justice of the Court of Common Pleas. Calvin inherited his father's home-place and his mother lived with him. He was the father of eight children and was a good citizen. He was of light complexion, sandy hair, of an impulsive nature and a man of courage, which accounts for his zealous patriotism. The tradition is that he afterwards served in the army.

The officers of the regiment and companies resolved themselves into a committee of war and after some hesitation admitted the officers of the "Neck" companies. They voted by a considerable majority, that Capt. Mowat's vessel ought to be destroyed, and appointed a committee of their number to consider in what manner it should be done, but no report has been found. This all caused so much consternation and