

MORNING REPORT

of Benjamin Whitcomb's Independent Corps of Rangers.

Being the ramblings of a Serjeant who has smelled too much of Congress's gunpowder
and King George's lackeys.

DECEMBER, 2006

The renderings of this Instant include—

CALENDAR: 13 Jan: Franklin, Charlotte, & Piper Birthday Bash; Queensbury, NY.

20 Jan: Unit meeting; Middletown Springs, VT.

Next Season: Several invites.

ELECTIONS: The Repshers are opting out of the treasurer job so, who wants to do it?

WHITCOMB'S F&I COMPANY: Wanna do it?

PERSONALS: Sam's a Dad.

FOR SALE: Tents, and pots, and gun—Oh, My!

FLAP JACK: How to jack leather—not to be confused with deer (you don't need a spotlight).

TWIRLING THE DISTAFF: *Maternal Mortality*, Part 2.

RANGER 225TH: Ben's bio.

And MUCH, MUCH more! Well, at least much more.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Foreseeable Future

13 Jan: Birthday of Benjamin Franklin, Queen Charlotte, & Anson Piper Celebration Dinner;
Queensbury, NY.

Along with the other b'days, it's the 80th for Anson Piper (Adj., 2^d Continental Artillery) so they are all going to be celebrated at once. The event will begin at 5:00 p.m. with socializing followed by a buffet at 6:30 followed by some entertainment. Cost is \$10.00 per person. Location is the VFW hall on Luzerne Rd. in Queensbury. Make reservations by 7 Jan. Anyone interested in going?

20 Jan: Unit Meeting; Middletown Springs, VT.

Our first gathering of the new year. We'll start the meeting at 11:30 a.m. that Sat. at the Middletown Community Church Fellowship Hall—the same place as the last couple years. If you wanna gab before the meeting, get there early. Otherwise, we can gab afterwards. A lunch will be provided for your dining pleasure. Bring dish(es), utensils, and your choice of beverage (unless you want water). Possible agenda (subject to alterations by whomever)—brief review of last year; attitudes & expectations for coming year; event invitations; brief discussion of authenticity guidelines in *Ranger Manual*; drill = advancing from flanks of platoons/sections and from center of company using Howe's (no weapons); learn a card

game or two (please bring a deck o' cards if you have one); maybe learn a song or two if time (yeah, right).

Directions: Get to Middletown Springs west of Rutland. There is a green in the center of town—you'll recognize it 'cause the town doesn't spread much beyond the edges of the green. On the upper side of the green is the church. Parking and the entrance to the hall are around the back.

Next Season

25-26 Mar: Command School; Fort Ti.

A school on learning how to be an nco or officer. One day of seminars & one day of field work. There will be a fee. One of the key objectives is to begin giving new commanders some training and experience.

31 Mar: Black Powder Centuries Reenactor's Tag Sale/Swap Meet; Lebanon, CT.

All reenactors from the Colonial periods up to the American Civil War are invited to participate or attend. Event open to the public. Sutlers welcome. Sponsored by the Jonathan Trumbull House and the Connecticut Colony Military Association. Period dress preferred. Fee for vendors will be \$15. Pre registration: Checks made out to CTDAR. Send to: Mary Brown, 218 Green Hollow Rd., Danielson, CT 06239. You may also register at the event, space allowable. If it rains there will be very limited space. Bring flies and tables. Canceled in event of snow and pre-registration fees will be returned.

14 Apr: Battle Road; Concord, MA.

Note: one day only.

27-28 Apr: Raid on Danbury; Danbury, CT.

2-3 Jun: Mabee Farm; Rotterdam Jct. NY.

9-10 Jun: Battle of Bordentown; Bordentown, NJ. (CL and BB)

Probably will be the big event of the year. Details at <http://www.battleofbordentown.com/index.html>.

16-17 Jun: Ethan Allen Days; Hoosick, NY. (LHA)

23-24 Jun: Vermont Historical Society Expo; Tunbridge, VT.

7-8 Jul: Hubbardton 230th; Hubbardton, VT. (LHA & CL Northern Dept.)

I am working on setting up the retreat over Fri. and Sat. camping half-way Fri. night.

21-22 Jul: Mt. Independence; Orwell, VT.

28-29 Jul: Upper Canada Village; Morrisburg, Ontario. (CL Northern Dept.)

11-12 Aug: Battle of Bennington; Hoosick, NY. (BAR only)

There is some proposed development—a dump—on part of the battlefield. This event is to draw attention and maybe save the area.

25-26 Aug: Rabble in Arms; LCMM.

25-26 Aug: Battle of Cooch's Bridge; Newark, DE. (BAR only as far as I know)

8-9 Sep: Rev War Ti; Where? (CL Northern Dept. encouraged event—there's a story here)

I have volunteered our group to organize and run a "Campfollowers Competition." We used to do 'em at Crown Point and had lots of fun with it. We set up a course with a number of stations on it at which the contestant has to perform some operation—peeling a potato, sew a button, fire a gun, scream, etc.

29-30 Sep: 20th Anniversary of the Continental Line; Mt. Vernon, VA. (CL)

Continental only—no Brits.

6-7 Oct: Saratoga 230th; Fort Edward, NY. (CL and BB)

There are questions as to the viability of this event. There is no American unit sponsor—24th Foot Brit sponsor. Site is the same as for the 225th.

20-21 Oct: Burning of Kingston; Kingston, NY.

??? Oct: Fall of Ft. Montgomery 230th; Fort Montgomery, NY.

Next Next Season

18-20 Jul: Loyalist Landing 225th; Shelburne, Nova Scotia.

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ELECTIONS

Mick and Ginny Repsher no longer want to take care of the unit's money so, in March, we will need to elect a new treasurer. While it is not necessary, it will probably be much more convenient if the new treasurer moves the account from the bank in Charlestown, NH, to a facility closer to their home—or, at least, to a bank with branch(es) more central to the membership.

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PERSONALS

Sam and Marie Casco have adopted a Korean baby and named him Eliyah Joo Sung Casco. The first name they gave him and the middle two, I understand, are like one name and the lad came with that monicker. On the web, you can see a picture of Sam and learn a bit about his violin business by going to <http://www.orebroviolinatelje.se/> and then click on "Vi pa ateljen." You'll learn a lot more if you can read Swedish. He can be contacted at a new e-mail address, samuel.casco@orebroviolinatelje.se.

Speaking of electron-mail addresses, Josh Wingler and Cheryl Muzzy both have new ones: beautifulwaterfalls@hotmail.com and Winglerj@westelcom.com. Can you figure out which is which? Cheryl also has a new phone number: 802-353-3973.

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FROG & FEATHER WAR

With the 250th of the French & Indian War now under way, some of us talked about participation in those events—particularly Ti. A number already have connections in that branch of the hobby and can take part with other units but I am wondering if anyone is interested in starting our own group for that period.

As it turns out—and some of you may remember this from previous history lessons presented in this rag or in conversation—Benjamin Whitcomb took part in the F&I War and, in fact, in the last year or two, commanded his own company of Mass. provincials or militia (I'm not sure of their exact role). I figure that would be a rather neat company to portray. The trick is that some of the gear is the same but some is different—particularly clothing—so we would need to get a few odds and ends items—civilian—to do a decent portrayal. We could probably even get away with using Norfolk since that came out in 1759. Otherwise, we would probably need to learn a bit of Bland's or some other manual.

I see this as a purely secondary activity to Rev War Whitcomb's with attendance at one or two events a year at most. What are your thoughts?

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FOR SALE

Quite a while back, Ray and Mary Ann Peryea sent me a list of things they have for sale. Not sure if they still have all this stuff but you can contact them if interested—3447 Ripton Rd., Lincoln, VT 05443—802-453-5850. Here's the list wif prices:

Tent—7x7x6 with 3'6" bell—complete with poles & stakes	225.00
Tent—7x7x8.5 convertible wedge (you know, flaps at both ends so you can set it up as a lean-to or fly)—complete with ropes, poles, & stakes	225.00
Turkey pot	25.00
Three-legged pot	25.00
Dutch oven	25.00
Bess (used very little)	650.00

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BAR

We still have never gone for an inspection. While I don't know how stinky they are going to get about it, it is a requirement for membership. Dues for '07 will be due 31 Mar.

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TWIRLING THE DISTAFF

Part 2 of the article begun last issue.

MATERNAL MORTALITY: FACT OR FABRICATION

Karen Mullian

Burial records from Christ Church, Philadelphia for 1751⁽²⁾ shows the causes of death for the 146 people buried there that year (Table 3). While the four deaths listed as "casualty" could include death by fire, there is no indication of either the sex or age of the victims. Even if they were all adult women, this category reflects only 6.26% of the 76 females buried in 1751 at Christ Church. There are seven deaths caused by "childbed," or 9.2%. By adding up the totals for age groups between 20 and 60 (n=51) and multiplying by 52% (percentage of females in the total 1751 burial population), and estimated female population of childbearing age can be determined (n=27). This raises the rate of death by childbirth to 21.95%, significantly higher than the rate arrived at for the 100 Chester County Quaker women. However, other factors should be considered--Philadelphia in 1751 was an urban area already considered by public, religious, and medical authorities as polluted by the man breweries, tanneries, and other waste-producing industries located amid the densely populated and narrow confines of the mid-18th century city; and filth and its resultant disease were prevalent among all segments of society.

Table 3. Burials at Christ Church, Philadelphia, December 24, 1750-December 24, 1751

Cause of Death	Total Population		Total Female Population		Total Females of Childbearing Age	
	N = 146	%	N = 76	%	N = 27	%
Smallpox	47	32.19%	24.44	32.09%	8.80	27.58%
Consumption	26	17.81%	13.52	17.75%	4.87	15.26%
Pleurisy	9	6.16%	4.68	6.14%	1.68	5.28%
Fits	9	6.16%	4.68	6.14%	1.68	5.28%
Childbed	7	4.79%	7.00	9.19%	7.00	21.95%
Fever	7	4.79%	3.64	4.78%	1.31	4.11%
Hooping Cough	6	4.11%	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00%

Teeth	6	4.11%	3.12	4.10%	1.12	3.52%
Aged	5	3.42%	2.60	3.41%	0.94	2.93%
Flux	4	2.74%	2.08	2.73%	0.75	2.35%
Quinsy	4	2.74%	2.08	2.73%	0.75	2.35%
Casualty	4	2.74%	2.08	2.73%	0.75	2.35%
Hives	2	1.37%	1.04	1.37%	0.37	1.17%
Impostume	2	1.37%	1.04	1.37%	0.37	1.17%
Mortification	2	1.37%	1.04	1.37%	0.37	1.17%
Dropsy	1	0.68%	0.52	0.68%	0.19	0.59%
Apoplexy	1	0.68%	0.52	0.68%	0.19	0.59%
Cholick {sic}	1	0.68%	0.52	0.68%	0.19	0.59%
Convulsion	1	0.68%	0.52	0.68%	0.19	0.59%
Gravel	1	0.68%	0.52	0.68%	0.19	0.59%
Surfeit	1	0.68%	0.52	0.68%	0.19	0.59%
Totals	146	100.00%	76	100.00%	27	100.00%

Forty-two years later, during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, there were 398 burials at Christ Church, 170 (43%) of whom were women. Women of childbearing age accounted for approximately 96 of the women buried, or 56 percent. Three deaths were attributed to childbirth, or 3.13 percent of all deaths among women of childbearing age. If the deaths attributable to yellow fever (214 total; 92 total females; 52 females of childbearing age) are subtracted, deaths due to childbirth rise to almost seven percent, considerably less than the deaths recorded at Christ Church in 1751, but still high than the rates for Chester County and Martha Ballard (see below). This reduction could possibly be the result of an overall tendency toward a decrease in family size among the general population⁽⁴⁾; certainly, it should not be credited to any mistaken belief that that by the late 18th-century Philadelphia had cleaned up its pollution problems.⁽⁵⁾

Martha Ballard, a Maine midwife who kept a journal of her practice³, lost only five mothers in 865 deliveries (women who died within a week of delivery). Family size in the neighborhood of Mrs. Ballard's practice averaged more than six children, or approximately 133 mothers, for a maternal mortality rate of 3.76%, closing approximating that found among the 100 Quaker women of Chester County, Pennsylvania (see Table 2).

This subject deserves further analysis. However, two preliminary observations can be drawn from Martha Ballard's journal and my Chester County study: 1) Childbirth was a much less dangerous life event for rural women in the colonial and federal periods of America than for their urban sisters, and 2) the supposition that childbirth was the overwhelming cause of death for the majority of 18th century women does not appear to be supported by the currently examined data.

NOTES/REFERENCES

¹ There is an unpublished journal in a private collection written between October 1794 and March 1805 by Enos Thomas, a Goshen Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania joiner, with entries on a wide variety of subjects, including 80 references to deaths in the neighborhood. Of these 25 (31.25%) refer to the deaths of women. While not all of the deaths are assigned a cause, two of these deaths were described as "aged and very infirm" and "an ancient woman aged 93," one death was attributed to difficulty breathing, one to consumption, one to the flux, and one to childbed. (One woman whose death is mentioned in the journal without a cause also turned up in the study of 100 Quaker women as having lived only a month following the birth of her third child.) Thomas's criteria for mentioning causes of death seems arbitrary and, therefore, not reliable for a study of this nature.

² *An Account of the Births and Burials in Christ-Church Parish, in Philadelphia, from December 24, 1750 to December 24, 1751* by Caleb Cash, Clerk, and Samuel Kirke, Sexton. Historical Society of

Pennsylvania. (NOTE: For those who notice that the data in the above table differs slightly from the originally published article, this is because I did not use a spreadsheet program to calculate the percentages; however, the differences are statistically insignificant.)

³ Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on her Diary, 1785-1812*. Knopf, New York, 1990.

⁴ Frost, J. William. *The Quaker Family in Colonial America*. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1973.

⁵ Powell, J.H. *Bring Out Your Dead*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia., 1949 [reprinted 1993 in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia.]

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FLAP JACK

I happened to come across the following and thought it to be of interest, particularly to those who make some of their own equipment. The first comes from Timothy Pickering.

For Jacking The Flaps of Cartridge Boxes. Let the flesh side of the leather be shaved smooth, & put outside. When 'tis well dried and warmed, rub it with the following composition, of: 6 pound of rosin,; 1 pound of beeswax; ½ pint of spirits of turpentine, all dissolved together and put on hot. Frequently hold the flap to the fire till enough of the stuff enter the pores of the leather, rubbing well. When cool, size it ... with a size made of rawhide, ribbing it well. If spirits of turpentine cannot be had, beeswax will answer; but it does not penetrate the leather so quick ... To save the jacking stuff, the flaps should be cut out before they are jacked; but it is said that the jacking should not some where the leather afterwards to be sewed as it will be too hard; ...”

The following comes from a reprint of the 1854 *Recollections of a Revolutionary War Soldier*:

We would go to a turner or wheelwright, and get head blocks turned, of various sizes, according to the heads that had to wear them, in shape resembling a sugar loaf; we would then get some strong upper, or light sole leather, cut it out in shape, close it on the block, then grease it well with tallow, and set it before a warm fire, still on the block, and keep turning it round before the fire, still rubbing on the tallow, until it became almost as hard as a sheet of iron ... We made the scabbards of our swords of leather, by closing on a pattern of wood, and treating it similar to the cap.

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RANGER 225TH

If you read the last edition of this rag, you will know that 225 years ago now, Benjamin Whitcomb's Independent Corps of Rangers had ceased to exist. It would seem that such action would put an end to this section of the newsletter. Well, fear not, instead of writing about the unit, I'm going to begin including material about the individuals. As you might expect, Major Ben will be the first since what we are doing is all his fault.

The second of sixteen children of Benjamin and Dorothy Whitcomb, our Benjamin first sees the light of day on 2 July 1737 and spends his childhood and teen years in the area of Lancaster & Leominster, MA. Depending on which source you believe, he serves in either Samuel Hurd's or Joseph Whitcomb's company during the battle of Lake George in Sept., 1755. For the remainder of the war, he continues to serve in various Mass. companies raised for the campaign season. As I mentioned above, he has his own company in '60 and '61—a couple sources say he has one earlier.

During those campaigns, it's likely Ben traveled the Crown Point road for, in 1761, he is one of the original grantees of Cavendish, VT, which lies along said road. It doesn't appear that he ever lives there probably taking profits from the sale of his lands. By 1767, he's living in Westmoreland, NH, where he meets and marries Lydia Howe. The first of their six children, Benjamin, is born in Westmoreland but by '71 the family moves to Putney, VT, after selling around 500 acres and a mill. The next year they move to Maidstone, VT, where Ben becomes a justice of the peace. The family is living in Guildhall, VT, when the war breaks out and it seems they moved back to Westmoreland shortly thereafter.

Ben enlists on 22 Jan. 1776 as a lieutenant in Samuel Young's company of Bedel's Regt. from NH. Rather than going with the company to Canada, the lieutenant stays behind in Orford, NH, to serve as a recruiting officer. In May, he brings his recruits to join the regiment that is retreating out of Canada with the rest of the army. By July, they are at Ti. Much of his story during the war has already been mentioned so I'm not going to repeat it here only to mention that his father dies in 1778 and two of his children are born in those years.

Out of the army, Whitcomb continues to live in Haverhill, NH, where the unit had been headquartered (I'm not sure when he brings his family north). In spite of being a private citizen, the Brits continue to keep watch on him suspecting he is going to lead a raid into Canada. In May of '82, he is captured by Joseph Louis Gill with 10 Indians from Odanak. The night before they are to turn him over to the Brits, Whitcomb escapes. The Indians with Gill charge their leader with allowing Ben to escape but there is no real proof. However, the Brits cease using him as a scout so they must have suspected something.

In late 1782, the Major buys some land in Lisbon, NH, where he is to spend the remainder of his life. In '85, he built the first framed house in the town. Regrettably, it burned in 1884. Several times, he had been one of the petitioners—often with some of his men—to the Republic of Vermont for the granting of various townships but VT never took any action on them. It is during this period that several of his men start signing over their back pay to Whitcomb. It is likely that, in spite of being something of a tough man willing and able to withstand severe hardships, he loaned his men money during the hard times of the war.

Over the next several years, the Major is elected to several local government offices, continues to buy and sell land in several towns in the region, and even is involved in the founding of a library in Bradford, VT. In 1818, now 81 years old, he is granted a pension of \$240.00/year which is increased to \$600.00 in 1826. His personal holdings listed in the application are not of any great value and he apparently is now living with his daughter, Ruth. On 22 July 1828, Ben dies at the age of 91. He is buried in the Salmon Hole Cemetery outside of Lisbon with his wife who had died in 1823. In the same cemetery is buried Samuel Young, the captain who had the company in which Whitcomb first enlisted and whose daughter married one of Whitcomb's sons. I would love to have been around when these two old soldiers got together with some of their men and started reminiscing—the stories they must have been able to tell.

Quando Omni Flunkus Moritati

Happy Holidayze

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Benjamin Whitcomb's Independent Corps of Rangers

A non-profit corporation established in 1975 to re-create the life style of the Rangers in the War of Independence, 1776-1781.