



# The Stow Minutemen

Issue 104 No. 1

March 2006

## Captain's Notes

*...the view from the front*

Greetings and Salutations fellow Patriots,

Welcome to the newly revived Stow Minutemen Newsletter! It looks like this is going to be a good year for the Company with all our new members, many of whom have accepted leadership roles within the unit and for that I am most grateful. Welcome Lt. Arch for being eager to see what the *view from the front* is like. Many thanks to Sgt. Adjutant Jenn for her tireless efforts with the many duties she has undertaken. A big hello to Sgt. Paymaster Jean, for picking up the books. Thanks to Music Master Amelia for taking a bigger lead in helping out our fine music unit. Websmith Paul (with help from John) has done an outstanding job in creating a whole new look for the website.

I would also like to thank the two outgoing Staff Officers for all their hard work for the Company over the years they served. Past Captain Rob Caponi: we're counting on your continued presence in the Minutemen, hopefully for many years to come. We'll be looking forward to your musket-ball-making at encampments and the added musket to our ranks up front in parades. And where would we be without past

Paymaster, past Adjutant, music teacher Bonnie "*Dances with Tumbleweeds*" Brench, now out in the wild frontiers of Texas. Hopefully we'll also see you at as many events as your time and the stagecoach schedules allow. Also a big thank you to Jo Brench, though she'll still be our Drum Sgt., her college life has made it inconvenient for her to continue full time with the music. The good news is all the events that happen this year after her and the other "higher learning" folks get out in May/June.

This past year we've seen a large growth in the numbers of new members to the Company and I want to keep that momentum going ... recruitment will be one of my big-

gest goals for the coming year. It is something that **everyone** can assist in, sometimes without even realizing that you're doing it. Talk to your friends and neighbors about the group and how much you enjoy it. Tell them that they should stop by an event or go to see us in a parade. Give them the URL of the website to see all the different things that we do. Sgt. Jenn and I will have new flyers printed soon. Everyone in the Company should keep a couple in their haversack just in case someone says to you "**Hey, that looks like fun... how can I get involved?!**" At both Battle Road '06 and at our Hartwell Tavern weekend I want us to set up a Recruitment table. We can put out some literature, drums, fifes, muskets, signage, our Guideon and other colonial items... anything to attract people over to talk with us about Colonial Reenacting. While most of our growth recently has been in the music section I also will be trying very hard to get people interested in the Musket and Distaff parts of our group. So please talk with your neighbors, coworkers, friends and family. You might be surprised with who might be interested in giving it a try.

I remain your most humbled and obedient servant,

Rick Lawson, Capt.

## Upcoming Events

(more details can be found on our website - [www.stowminutemen.org](http://www.stowminutemen.org))

### APRIL

Sat. April 8 - Bedford, MA - Pole Capping and Parade

Sat. April 15 - Battle Road events at MMNHP

Mon. April 17 - Patriot's Day Trail March

# Quartermaster's Notes

By Linda Stokes, Sergeant Quartermaster

Since there are so many newcomers in our group, I thought it would be helpful to summarize the clothing we wear so that our new members can avoid some of the mistakes that many of us made when we were beginners. Your long-term goal should be to have a period correct outfit to wear to encampments and parades. In the short run, there are compromises you can make to get an acceptable outfit for a reasonable price. You might want to also decide on what class impression you want to give. Do you want to represent a laborer or a wealthy farmer? The differences would be in choice of fabric or buttons or, sometimes, garment.

If you look at pictures of the 1975 Stow Minutemen, you will notice that they all wore the same hunting shirt and green breeches. As more research has been done over the years, we have realized that the minutemen did not wear uniforms, but wore their everyday clothes or, in some cases, their Sunday-best. After all, going to confront the British was an important event. So today's Stow Minutemen, with the large variety of individual clothing choices, probably looks closer to the original group.

As you peruse web pages and catalogs and shop at sutleries, the first thing you should be aware of is that not everything that is sold is correct for our period and our New England location. Some places are well documented, but others are not. If in doubt, check with one of our more experienced members. A good reference is the book Tidings from the Eighteenth Century, by Beth Gilgun. Also, the web page [www.18cnewenglandlife.org](http://www.18cnewenglandlife.org) has a lot of information.



Fabric choices include linen, osnaburg, cotton, silk, fustian (flax-linen and cotton), linsey-woolsey (linen and wool), silk brocade and wool. Simple stripes, checks, and some prints are okay. There is no documentation for the use of plaids, so avoid them. Period prints are

the hardest to recognized. If you want to use prints, check out some historic web pages.

**Stockings:** above the knees, usually cotton or wool, plain or striped. Plain colored soccer socks work. *Clocked* stockings (embroidered at the ankles) were worn by both men and women. **Garters**, worn below the knees, hold the stockings up. (Some lycra helps the stockings stay up, and does not compromise the period look.)

**Shoes:** You can buy colonial shoes, on which you can add buckles or use ties. For Stow, plain toed, black tie shoes are the preferred alternative. But Stow is least fussy about shoes, especially on the Trail March, where comfortable shoes should be worn. Short **gaiters** are worn to hide modern shoes.

**Knee breeches:** *drop front* (came in after 1750) or *fly front* (buttoned fly – not common after the early 1770's). Can be buttoned, buckled (upper class) or tied at the knee (working class). Almost all in Stow wear a drop front. Typical colors include brown, blue, red, rust, gold, and white as well as shades of green and blue. Coat and breeches were frequently made from same material. *An acceptable alternative is to take modern pants of appropriate material and make a cuff at the knees and add buttons. You can use some of the cut-off material to make a drop panel, if you want.*

**Shirts:** These are large, pullover tops with long, cuffed sleeves and drop shoulders, and are worn tucked into the knee breeches. There is one button at the top of the slit neck, which should be kept buttoned. Cotton or linen is the usual material choices with wool being used for cold weather. They can be *ruffled* (gentleman's), *striped* (working class) or *checked* (working class). In colonial days, this garment would have served as a nightshirt, too.

**Waistcoat:** also called a weskit. This article of clothing is comparable to the modern vest of a men's suit. The style in the 1770's was shorter than in the previous period. It should be long enough to cover the waistband of the breeches. This is one piece of clothing that is relatively easy to make. They are usually finished with self-covered, pewter, wood or horn buttons. Waistcoats were sometimes made to contrast with the coat and

breeches. Silk brocade fabrics make great waistcoats for a more elegant look. Since some colonials marched to Concord in their Sunday-best, this may be an acceptable choice for a gentleman farmer. Stripes are also nice.

**Jackets/coats:** Over the waistcoat, a jacket or coat would be worn in colonial days. There are many different styles: *sleeved waistcoat* (working class), *short jacket* (working class), *frock coat* (less formal, worn by all classes with details making the difference), and *dress coat* (more formal). Coats in the eighteenth century were fit very snugly. Most of us find that fit uncomfortable, so if you make one from an authentic pattern you should test the fit first. Jackets are expensive to buy and hard to make; an acceptable alternative is to wear a farmer's smock (working class impression). This is really just an oversized shirt, worn hanging outside the breeches to mid-thighs or knees. An appropriate smock can be made from Townsend's linen hunting shirt by removing the cape (this is just top-stitched down.). An osnaburg shirt also makes a nice smock. *For cold weather, a good, inexpensive choice is a blanket shirt.* A colonial man would not have been seen without a jacket/coat on, even in hot weather. (A man today does not generally wear his suit vest alone.) But most of the modern Stow minutemen are frequently seen without this piece of clothing. If you want to participate in more period correct events, you will need to have at least a smock.

**Overcoats:** The fashionable choice in 1775 was a great coat, which was caped to help shed rain and frequently made from heavy, fulled wool. Cloaks were less common in New England by this period and would most frequently be worn by military officers. Capotes are easy to make, but, unfortunately, are not appropriate for a colonial New England farmer. An overcoat is an optional piece of clothing. With modern, light-weight layering options, this is generally a re-enactor's last purchase. Just make sure any modern under-layers are not visible.

**Hats:** wool felt hats – tricorner (all three sides cocked), hats cocked on the left side, and plain hats (not cocked), scotch bonnet (preferred without the pompom or with the same color pompom), Liberty cap (Townsend's voyageur's cap). Around camp, a work cap is always appropriate. If you are not carrying a

musket, the plain, uncocked hat gives you sun protection. Stow usually wears a white cockade on a cocked hat attached with a button, which can be easily made by gathering one side of a piece of ribbon.

**Neck stock:** a square or triangle of cloth, rolled and knotted at the neck (working class); a silk handkerchief or a specially made, tie-on or buckled-on neck stock.

**Haversack:** Also called a ditty bag. To carry all your modern stuff out of sight. A sling bag is more authentic.

Next time: Women's clothing

References:

[Eighteenth-Century Clothing at Williamsburg](#)  
by Linda Baumgarten  
[Costume Close-Up Clothing Construction and Pattern 1750-1790](#) by Linda Baumgarten & John Watson with Florine Carr  
[A Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in Colonial America](#) by Dale Taylor  
[Clothing for Ladies and Gentlemen of Higher and Lower Standing](#) prepared by Minute Man National Historical Park  
[Tidings from the Eighteenth Century](#) by Beth Gilgun  
[www.18cnewenglandlife.org](http://www.18cnewenglandlife.org)  
[www.18cnewenglandlife.org](http://www.18cnewenglandlife.org)

Web Pages:

(\* are ones I have dealt with through the internet or purchased at their sutlery)

\*Jas Townsend. & Son, Inc.  
<http://jas-townsend.com/>

\*The Sutlery of Mount Mercy, G. Gedney Godwin, Inc.  
<http://www.gggodwin.com/>

Fox River Traders

[www.foxrivertraders.com](http://www.foxrivertraders.com)

Kannik's Korner (patterns)

[www.kanniskorner.com](http://www.kanniskorner.com)

PeriodFabric.com

[www.periodfabric.com](http://www.periodfabric.com)

Hamilton Dry Goods

[www.hamiltondrygoods.com](http://www.hamiltondrygoods.com)

Roy and Debra Najecki

[www.najecki.com](http://www.najecki.com)

\*Log Cabin Shop

<http://www.logcabinonline.com/>

Smiling Fox Forge,  
[www.smilingfoxforgellc.com](http://www.smilingfoxforgellc.com)  
\*Silly Sisters (women's clothing)  
[www.sillysisters.com](http://www.sillysisters.com)  
\*Flying Canoe Traders  
[www.flyingcanoetraders.com](http://www.flyingcanoetraders.com)  
\*Smoke & Fire Company  
[www.smoke-fire.com](http://www.smoke-fire.com)  
\*Burnley and Trowbridge(fabrics)  
[www.burnleyandtrowbridge.com](http://www.burnleyandtrowbridge.com)

## Member Notes

**Malcolm and Eliot Littlefield** will be dancing in the Commonwealth Ballet's original production of *The Secret Garden* at the Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School on March 25th and 26th. Eliot will be performing the role of Colin and Malcolm the role of Dickon. There are no fifes and drums, but the story is very beautifully translated into dance and all of the music is by turn of the century English composers such as William Walton and Edward Elgar. Further information is available at [www.commonwealthballet.org](http://www.commonwealthballet.org) or at any Fife & Drum rehearsal.

**Gary Langenwalter**, our member out in the wilds of Portland, OR, recently published an article entitled "Life: Our Ultimate Customer," which shows how sustainability is the next competitive wave after lean manufacturing. It appears in *Target*, the periodical of the Association for Manufacturing Excellence, February issue. If any one would like copy of the article, Gary would be glad to e-mail it to them.

**Joanna Brench**, our Drum Sergeant and the most recent recipient of the Stow Minuteman Company scholarship, started her freshman year at UMass-Amherst this past fall. She is majoring in Pre-Vet/Animal Science, and has been able to work with a variety of animals, including sheep, goats, pigs and beef cattle. Unfortunately, Joanna recently tore her left ACL, and will be having surgery. She'll be unable to march with us while she recovers, but she says to not worry - she'll just turn the stand pieces into 'sit pieces' and drum while seated!



## Notes from the Stow Tavern

By John Willoughby

The word "tavern" brings to mind images of a quaint old building serving as bar and restaurant. In colonial times taverns were places to get a drink and a bite to eat, but they were so much more than that. Taverns served a number of critical functions in colonial America and were indispensable for both commerce and government.

The Stow Tavern was a real place, and was a thriving establishment back in 1775. Over the next few newsletters I invite you join me in a glimpse of tavern life in colonial America. In this first article we're going to take a look at the role of the tavern in the colonies in 1775. The information in this article about taverns in general comes from a wide variety of sources that I have not identified individually. The information specifically about taverns in Stow comes largely from the notes of the Stow Historical Society.

### What is a tavern?

A tavern is, loosely, a place of business where people gather to drink alcoholic beverages and, more than likely, also be served food. The word derives from the Latin *taverna*, whose original meaning was a shed or workshop. The distinction of a tavern from an inn, bar or pub varies by location and period in history, in some places being identical and in others being distinguished by traditions or by legal license.

Gathering in a tavern to drink beer or other alcoholic drinks is a longstanding social tradition dating at least to Sumer (3500 BC); in Sumer the tavern keeper was traditionally a woman but in other places and times women could be completely excluded from tavern culture.

They have existed in England from as early as the 13th Century and were often kept by



women usually known as Ale-wives. This term lives on in the Boston "Alewife". In the mid-14th century there were only three taverns in London. An act of 1552 allowed forty in London, eight in York, six in Bristol and many more in towns all across England. By the 19th century the word tavern had developed an archaic flavor, the current term being public house (pub).

Taverns in the colonies started out simply enough but by the mid-eighteenth century taverns varied greatly. In the city one could find simple one-room taverns catering to the lower class as well as decorated taverns with many rooms serving the well-to-do. In the outlying towns taverns were less elaborate affairs serving the local townsfolk and travelers. In the frontier a simple, small tavern would serve a wide area and "locals" would come from further away to enjoy some company and a rest from their labors. Frontier taverns often combined other businesses under their roof as well and it was not uncommon for a remote tavern to also serve as a general store for basic necessities.

Taverns would vary quite a bit in size and style. The one thing common to all taverns was the common room where locals and strangers alike would gather and enjoy a drink together. In a larger tavern this might be the common room or tap room, but could be supplemented by a separate dining room, parlor, dance hall, gaming rooms, sleeping room, and others.

The functions of most of these are self-explanatory. The parlor was a separate room (or rooms) that would be found in a better class of tavern and was commonly used as a sitting room for women travelers, a room where traveling merchants might conduct business, or might be hired for the exclusive use of some wealthy person or family. In the more questionable establishments in the cities these extra rooms were often used by "women of ill repute" or fences buying and selling stolen merchandise.

The dance hall was, of course, used for dancing but was also rented out for any function that required a larger room. Clubs and various organizations would often hold meetings in a rented room at the local tavern. Religious services were often held in tavern dance halls for smaller minority religions that could not afford to build their own

meeting house. Keep in mind, of course, that in colonial times "minority religions" were all still branches of Christianity!



### **Taverns for fun**

Taverns played a very important part in colonial life in a number of ways, but they were first and foremost a place for the locals to congregate and socialize as well as share information. They provided a place to swap stories, hear the latest news from the travelers. Local newspapers and other publications were often available to read. And, of course, they provided beer, cider, rum, and a number of other alcoholic beverages.

Drinking and gossip were the focal points of the tavern but were not the only means of entertainment. Games, typically used for gambling, were often available, ranging from billiards, chess, and backgammon to cards, dice, and others. Taverns were often the focal point for spectator sports as well, which primarily included horse racing and cock-fights.

Taverns sold their wares for cash, and often to travelers or merchants who had cash to pay with. This meant that that tavern owner was one of the few people who had a steady flow of cash. Tavern owners were often among the more well-to-do in a town and also served as a sort of local bank, extending credit to their customers who would keep a running tab. Indeed, customers could often even obtain a small cash loan from the owner as well, since he was used to tracking and collecting on debts anyway.

### **Taverns for the traveler**

The colonial tavern was also critical for the development of trade. A short trip to Boston to sell your produce or products could take several days. Taverns provided places for these business people to stop and have a bite to eat, enjoy a drink and some company, and find some accommodation for the night before continuing on their journey.

Accommodations were quite different from what we are used to today. In most taverns

patrons often shared a single room and most likely a single table. Sleeping accommodations were not much better with two or more beds to a room and typically at least two people to a bed. These room-mates and bed-mates would usually be strangers to each other so things could get cozy indeed!

An English officer wrote of this custom in America:

"The general custom of having two or three beds in a room to be sure is very disagreeable; it arises from the great increase of traveling within the last few years, and the smallness of their houses, which were not built for houses of entertainment."

A traveler would often be asleep in their bed when the landlord would enter, candle in hand, and escort a stranger in to share the bed with you for the rest of the night. This situation, far from being viewed as unacceptable, was a necessity of the times and no one gave it much thought. Snoring bed-mates or other hazards were merely part of the hardship of traveling and, if not particularly welcome, were at least not unexpected.

Lodging on the road was critical to the ability of people to travel whether for commerce or other business and without the taverns to provide accommodation travel would be difficult indeed. Keep in mind that Boston, from Stow, is at least a 4 hour ride by horseback and considerably longer by foot. The idea of traveling somewhere and back again in a day, taken for granted in 2006, was just not possible in most cases back in colonial times. Even trips to other towns in the same state could easily be multi-day journeys

In addition to housing the traveler, the tavern would often serve as the place of business for traveling merchants who would set up shop at the tavern for the duration of their stay.

### **Taverns for civic functions**

Taverns were not just useful for town functions, but served a crucial role in the development and government of the colony as well. In the smaller towns the people did not have the resources to waste on buildings dedicated to public functions, and the tavern's rooms would often be used for a number of civic functions including acting as the

local court house. Of course, most towns had a meeting house that served as both church and town meeting place, but this not best suited to a number of other civic functions. Besides, if you could meet in the tavern (where there was beer) or the meeting house (where there was none)...

Because travel was difficult in colonial times, instead of litigants all traveling to a central court, the court came round to them. The series of towns that the traveling judiciary would stop in on one trip made up a "circuit" and while today that refers to an area of legal jurisdiction, back then it literally meant the circuit that the judge would travel around. Judges traveling on the circuit needed not only a place to stay on their journeys, but a place to conduct business. Taverns filled that role and often provided a room to serve as a makeshift court when the judge was in town.

The local tavern often served as well as the headquarters for the militia and, later, the minutemen. This was convenient not only because of the available rooms that could be used but also because the promise of beer greatly encouraged attendance at the periodic military drills. The towns quickly learned that by offering to buy beer for the company after a day of practice their attendance rates jumped dramatically!

### **Taverns in Stow**

Stow has had taverns since shortly after it was first incorporated as a town. The first tavern in Stow was the Rice tavern, established in 1685 in part of what is now Maynard. It was in operation for over 100 years. Rice family descendants are still involved in colonial activities as musicians with the Sudbury Ancients today. At the peak there were 16 taverns in Stow, including the Rice tavern, the Gardner Inn built in 1723 (where Lafayette is believed to have stopped on his tour), the Pompositticut Inn on Great Road, the Conant Inn on Crescent St., the Joel Richardson Tavern, the Stow Tavern, and others.

We know the most about the Stow Tavern. Built in 1725 on one of the original 12 Stow town lots at the west end of town it was owned first by Stephen Hall who sold it to Boaz Brown who in turn sold it to the Stow family (who were not among the original settlers of Stow but came later). When the Stow

Tavern was built it was one of three taverns and it included a large main building and a big stable and sheds. The sheds were high enough to shelter loads of merchandise from outlying towns as they made their way to the markets in and around Boston. The stable could tie-up 50 horses and it was often full. Stow was on the mail route from Boston to Albany and many horse teams passed through each day. 4 stage coaches passed through each day - 2 in each direction - between Boston and Fitchburg. Boston was 4 hours away by carriage and many travelers would stop in for the night on their way through.

The tavern itself had a spacious dining room on the west side, a bar-room, and a dance hall that was also used for meetings and as a meeting place of worship for the local Adventists. Its location on the edge of town made it ideal for farmers from towns to the West who were on their way to sell their produce in the city. They would stop at the Stow Tavern, water their animals in the nearby stream, and spend the night before continuing their journey.

#### **Visit the Stow Tavern again next issue**

Join me next issue as we take a look at what people drank back in 1775. Part 2 of this series will be titled "water, water, everywhere and not a drop to drink", or, "Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy"

## **Music Masters Notes**

By Matthew Brench & Amelia Rogers, Music Masters

The Stow fifers and drummers have been working hard on a new stand piece for the William Diamond Muster in May. Barring soccer, SATs and other conflicts we could have a formidable lineup of fifteen fifers and ten drummers! We have welcomed many new families and musicians into the group in the last year and are thrilled to have Peter Sullivan return to help us shape up the drum line. We sorely miss Bonnie Brench who finally moved to Texas to be with her husband, but

she is still in touch and will rejoin us for several events during the year. Our first event is the Bedford Pole Capping on April 8. If you can't make it to that, don't miss us in Lexington for the muster on May 6!

## **Stow Minutemen Company Scholarship**

The Stow Minuteman Company wishes to recognize and encourage an active interest in and understanding of American colonial history. The Stow Minuteman Company is kept alive by many families and individuals who represent the people that lived in 1775, and we wish to reward and encourage this family tradition among our members by offering a scholarship for the pursuit of further education or training.

This year we will again offer a \$500 scholarship to any member who has been active for at least three years and is currently enrolled in a high school or college program, or is serving in the United States military. For further information and an application form, contact Linda Stokes, fifer-linda@comcast.net.

## **Adjutant Notes**

By Jenn Siegel, Sergeant Adjutant

Welcome, or rather, farewell, from the first issue of the reborn Stow Minutemen newsletter! I'm very excited to get this newsletter back on its feet, and this should be the first of four newsletters this year. To keep this going, I do need your help - please think of things you'd like to submit, and, well, submit them! Also, if you have any suggestions on ways to improve the newsletter, please let me know.

Also remember to check out our revamped website at [www.stowminutemen.org](http://www.stowminutemen.org) - it contains all the info you need on the group, including details of the events for the year.

## **Future Events**

(More detailed event info can be found at [www.stowminutemen.org](http://www.stowminutemen.org))

### **MAY**

Sat. May 6 - Lexington, MA - Diamond's Music Tattoo and Muster

Sat. May 13 - Stow Lower Village Festival

Sat. May 20 - Stow Springfest

Sun. May 21 - Newton, MA - Veteran's Memorial Parade

Mon. May 29 - Boylston, MA - Memorial Day Parade (10:30am)

Mon. May 29 - Stow, MA - Memorial Day Parade (noon)

### **JUNE**

June 17-18 - Lincoln, MA - Hartwell Tavern demo

Sat. June 24 - Boxborough, MA - Fifer's Day Parade

### **JULY**

Mon. July 4 - Needham, MA - 4th of July Parade

July 7-9 - Marblehead, MA - Glover's Regiment Encampment

### **AUGUST**

August 5-6 - Sturbridge, MA - OSV's Rebels and Redcoats weekend

**Stow Minutemen Company**

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