

# The Stow Minutemen

Issue 106 No. 2

July 2008



## Captain's Notes...the view from the front

Greetings and warmest salutations;

Yes these are warm salutations as the mercury climbs into the mid 90s and we're less than two weeks until the Red Coats to Rebels event at Old Sturbridge Village. We've reached the mid point of the 2008 Season and it has been an exciting year thus far. We became officially incorporated with the Commonwealth... thanks go out to all those that helped with this task. The next step will be our obtaining Federal Tax Exempt status, but that is a dragon/windmill for another campaign.

I would like to welcome our newest members to the Company. The Close family of West Concord, Carl, Susan and their children joined us at the Hartwell Tavern event in June and we're glad that they have felt welcomed into our community and are looking forward to many years of reenacting together. For those who didn't make the Hartwell Encampment, Carl is a Master Blacksmith and teaches the trade at his studio in West Concord, please checkout their website: <http://www.hammersmithstudio.com/index.html>

Carl and Susan's son Alfred really had a blast playing with our other colonial youngsters.

Another new face you might see at an event is Barbara Bell, she is a retired grade school teacher with a love of American history... exactly the type of person to embrace this hobby and who would want to share knowledge learned. The nice thing about a lot of the people we encounter, I'm talking the "public" now, is that they are there at an event because they already have some interest in learning something more about our history. Nobody really forces them to come, unless they are the young children dragged to the event by their parents... but even they can be brought around with a game of Trap Ball.

The Company has grown a lot over the past couple years, we're expanding our resources and our portrayals, we are always striving to become better and more learned in the ways of our forbearers. We garner respect from others in the hobby, as seen recently by the "poaching" of some of our young Fifers by the French!! If they are going to steal, they will only steal from the best. I am always proud to say that I am a member of the Stow Minutemen Company as we are a unit always growing, bettering ourselves, not infighting and becoming stagnant and complacent as some other units do. Please, let's always keep growing, always keep trying to make our unit and the portrayal that we do the very best we can make it.

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))

### August

Sat-Sun 2-3 - Redcoats to Rebels, OSV  
Sun 10th - West School Event



## 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](mailto:fifer-linda@comcast.net).

## Member Notes

**Joanna Brench** is not only spending her summer shadowing a local large animal vet, but is also available for part-time pet-sitting. She'll take care of your animals, large and small, while you're away! Contact her at [drummersheep@yahoo.com](mailto:drummersheep@yahoo.com)

**Alex Owen** graduated from Bancroft School in Worcester on June 5, and will be attending Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in the fall. He's thinking of majoring in "something to do with math and science" - an admirable choice at WPI! He also plans on joining the Navy ROTC while in school, and continuing on in the Navy for the four years after graduation.

**Matt Brench** graduated from UMass-Amherst, and will be starting at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in the fall. He'll be a member of the class of 2011 at the Seminary, and passed along this cute tidbit: "Fun fact among the musicians: I'm in the class of 2011 for graduate school, Amanda is in the class of 2011 for college, and Brittany, Alana, Lacey, and Chelsea are in the class of 2011 for high school!"

**Malcolm Littlefield** is dancing in Orlando through the month of July. One of the Orlando Ballet Company choreographers is creating a piece just for him and two others which he will

be performing in the Orlando area. He is sorry to miss various fife and drum events and hopes his plane is on time Aug. 1 so he can make it to OSV!

**Eliot Littlefield** has temporarily laid his snare sticks aside in favor of timpani, bass drum and marimba mallets which he is putting to use at the Interlochen Music Camp. We'll see if he still likes music after three weeks of nothing else but the occasional marshmallow and swim in a freezing cold lake!

## Music Master Notes

By Amelia Rogers

In Boxborough on Fifer's Day, June 21, the Stow Minutemen invited the fifers and drummers from Boxborough and Acton to join them and play together at Flerra Field for the 225 year unpronounceable-centennial. Other parade-goers were serenaded with White Cockade, Green Cockade, Rakes of Mallow and a rousing performance of Grandfather's Clock.

A hearty welcome to three new families from Acton who will be coming to practice with us this summer. Music rehearsals for the summer are being held in Stow at the Old Town Hall on Thursdays, from 6 to 8, and anyone interested in trying out an instrument, seeing what we are about, or just listening is welcome to drop by. Please pass the word! And if you send an e-mail to [musicmaster@stowminutemen.org](mailto:musicmaster@stowminutemen.org) we'll make sure to have enough music on hand.



## The Biscuit

By Linda Stokes

A standard food issued to both American and British soldiers during the Revolution was the biscuit; also called sea biscuit or hardtack biscuit. It is a form of unleavened bread and has been a staple in soldiers' diets for centuries because it

keeps indefinitely and holds up well during shipping.

During the Revolution, the most common biscuit shape was almost certainly round, since they would be hand-made. Two round biscuits, each four inches in diameter and five-eighths inch thick would have been equivalent of the daily ration of one pound of bread in the Continental Army.

Here is a recipe for making a biscuit:

2 cups of flour  
1/2 tablespoon salt  
1/2 cup of water

Mix ingredients. Add extra water, a teaspoon at a time, until you have a very stiff, but not sticky, dough. Roll into a ball and let it sit for a few minutes to set up. Roll the dough to form a circle 3/8 inch thick. Punch 12 – 16 holes into each round to help moisture escape while baking. Bake in a 350° oven on, preferably, a brick (you know, like a brick oven) or on a cookie sheet (not authentic) for a tastier (somewhat) biscuit one-half hour or until completely dried. Let biscuit continue drying outside of the oven for a day or two. Or if you are out in the field, bake it on a flat rock set in the coals of your fire.

If you look online you will find recipes for biscuits using shortening or sugar. This may make a tastier biscuit, but it will ruin the storage life of your biscuit radically and you will soon find yourself with a moldy biscuit. These crackers will keep indefinitely. The National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England had a ships biscuit dating to about 1784. They also have in their collection a biscuit mold that will punch the holes as well as cut out the round shape.

Biscuits, in their various forms, were a common colonial food item and it seems possible that at least some of the Minutemen would have some on hand so they could be ready in a minute's notice. As such it seems to be a good addition to our re-enactor's kit. No need to actual eat it! But if you do decide to try eating one, make sure you have strong teeth or at least a cup of coffee or tea for dipping.

If you have no desire to make your own, you can buy them online from one of the original suppliers of hardtack biscuits to the Union Army during the Civil War. The G. H. Bent Company of Milton, Massachusetts, founded in 1801, has reintroduced the biscuit, selling mainly to Civil War re-enactors. A box is only \$10 plus shipping. The only problem for us is that the post industrial revolution biscuit was square or rectangular. According to Gene Pierotti, President of the company, "If you soak them in cold water, they'll puff right up and absorb it, like a sponge. And then they (the Union soldier re-enactors) fry that in bacon fat, and it's called 'skillygalee.' I don't particularly like that, but it's alright." Testimonials on the Bent Company's web page claim that their crackers are not bad at all.

Mostly from "The Packet" by Mark R. Tully.



## **Future Events**

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

### **August**

Sat-Sun 2nd-3rd - Sturbridge, MA - Redcoats to Rebels, OSV

Sun 10th - West School Event

### **September**

Sat. 13th-14th - Billerica, MA - Yankee Doodle Days

Sun 21st - West Boylston, MA - West Boylston Parade

Sat 27th - Sudbury, MA - Sudbury Colonial Faire

### **December**

Sun 7th - Maynard, MA - Maynard Christmas Parade

Sat 13th - Maynard, MA - WAVM / Beacon Santa Telethon

**Stow Minutemen Company**

**PO Box 174**

**Stow, MA 01775**