



The Stow Minutemen

Issue 107 No. 1

March 2009

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

Greetings and warmest salutations;

The 2009 season is upon us... this will be a banner year for both the Stow Minutemen Company, and for our good friends at Minuteman National Historic Park. This is the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Park and the 44th Anniversary of the reforming of the Company. In 2008 we welcomed new members to our fold and didn't really lose anyone along the way, so it was an up year. I'm hoping that our efforts to recruit new people to our group will prove fruitful.

We had a very productive Company Meeting at the end of January with a couple of important missions for the upcoming year. We are going to investigate the next steps in the Non-Profit Incorporation process, acquiring our Federal Tax Exempt status. Also it was unanimously voted upon that the Company do everything in its power to secure an artifact of historic importance to both the Company and to the Town - an actual musket that most likely answered the call on 19 April 1775. More on this subject later.

Our Annual Hartwell Tavern Encampment will take place over the weekend of Saturday June 13th & Sunday the 14th. Load-In and Set-Up will be Friday evening. Once again we will be asking for everyone to pitch in and assist wherever they can. Linda, Apará, Arch and I will be looking for people to help with food prep, cooking, fire maintenance, and cleanup. Last year the sign up sheet thing seemed to work well and we will be looking for volunteers for all the tasks that it takes to feed an Army like ours. Jim Hollister, Roger Fuller and the other Rangers are looking forward to our expanding on what we did last year.

The other big Company Encampment will be the first weekend in August at Old Sturbridge Village.

All of you that made it to the event last year know what fun we had all weekend, even when the weather turned a little bit moist and blowing. So many people in the hobby that I have spoken to since then complimented me on our Company's site with the many demonstrations of crafts, blacksmithing, the Doctor and game master. There was a little bit of everything for everyone to enjoy.

I want to thank everyone in the Company for all their assistance over this past year and for the continued support they give. Not only the Staff Officers, but everyone of you has at one time or another helped out and that is something that is really special about our group. Everyone has an equal say in what happens and everyone (16 years or older) gets a vote on everything we do. We are an example of all that is good about our country, our history, our government and the democratic process.

I remain your most humbled and obedient servant,

Rick Lawson, Capt.

Upcoming Events

(more details can be found on our website - www.stowminutemen.org)

April

Sat 11th - Bedford Pole Capping

Sat 18th - Battle Road, MNHP

Mon 20th - Annual Trail March to Concord

Sat 25th - Battle Road Heroes, MNHP (Music contingent)



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 scholarship to any member who has been active for at least three years and is currently enrolled in a high school or college program. For further information, guidelines, and an application form, contact Rick, rick@stowminutemen.org

Member Notes

Matt Brench is excited to announce that on December 19th, shortly after the last edition of this Newsletter was released, he got engaged to his girlfriend, Becca Melillo. Becca is a Music Education major at Grove City College, and lives in Hudson, MA. No wedding date has yet been set, but the current intent is June 2010. In the meantime, maybe we'll be able to get Becca to learn the fife!

{Congrats, Matt and Becca!!}

Our far-West member, **Gary Langenwaller**, has been up to some interesting things! In his own words:

After 7 years of preparation, including 2 years of theology school (at Boston University), I'll be ordained this June at the annual Oregon-Idaho Conference of the United Methodist Church. I'm being ordained as a deacon focusing on sustainability (People, Planet, and Profit), with a special call to the workplace. As in all new ordinations in the United Methodist Church, this is provisional. After a minimum of 2 years I can

apply for a permanent ordination. So, as of July 1, I can use the title "Reverend".

I have founded a new company – Sustainability Partners International. Web site: www.sustainabilitypartnersintl.com

I will be presenting my Patriot's Day talk at the Tigard Public Library, Tigard, Oregon (city of 45,000 people) in March. Of course, I'll be dressed in colonial clothing!

Acting, Singing, and Banging on things other than snare drums this spring

Courtesy of Amelia Rogers

Christian Owen and **Katy Needle** will be performing in the Hale Middle School play, *Seussical* (<http://hale.nrsd.net/index.php?id=54>):

Friday, March 13th @ 7:00pm

Saturday, March 14th @ 7:00pm

Sunday, March 15th @ 2:00pm

Prices are \$6 for adults, \$4 for students, \$3 for seniors (See website above for tickets, or ask Christian or Katy)

Alana Toabe will be performing in the Nashoba Regional HS production of *My Fair Lady* on March 20 (7:30), 21 (7:30), and 22(2:00). Tickets are in the \$8 to \$10 range and order forms will be available from Alana soon.

Debbie Owen will be singing in a Cantata Singers concert on Friday, May 8, Jordan Hall, Boston at 8:00 pm. On the program are a couple of pieces by Britten and the premiere of a piece by local composer, Andy Vores. Also, the children of the Classroom Cantatas program will perform their pieces. Check here for tickets: <http://cantatasingers.org/season/08-09/may8.htm> (PS As well as being a fine composer, Andy is a friend of Amelia who strongly recommends this concert!)

Eliot Littlefield's and **Julian Littlefield's** Destination Imagination teams will be performing their Challenges at the Chelmsford High School on Saturday, March 14. Eliot's team is scheduled for 9:15 AM in the gym (follow signs for Operation Co-Operation), Julian's team will go on stage at 1:40 in Lecture Hall A (follow signs for Instinct Messaging). Directions and other info available at www.madikids.org

Eliot Littlefield will be performing in a Boston Youth Symphony Concert at the Tsai Performance Center at BU on Sunday, April 26 at 3 pm. Included on the program is Barber's First Symphony which has an awesome timpani part. For further information and tickets you may go to www.bysoweb.org or see Eliot or Amelia who may have extra tickets.

Learning to Drum and Reflections on an MCV Workshop

By Malcolm Littlefield

Over the last few months I have tried to learn about the differences between drum and fife by seeking drum lessons and comparing what I learn with the knowledge I already possessed about fife. Historically, they each served as communication utilities; however, the similarities end there. The instruments obviously look completely different, make completely different sounds, require completely different techniques, and attract completely different players (the dispensation of mothers to try fife and fathers to try drum is evident at any weekly practice). There may even exist a friendly rivalry between drummers and fifers. Particularly notable is the casual humor with which fifers admit to lacking rudimentary knowledge about drumming, and drummers admit to possessing no understanding of fife.

The first significant obstacle I encountered as a beginning drummer was the required precision and coordination necessary to perform a seven stroke roll—a staple rudiment, without which the first measure of most songs would be impossible. When I began fife it took me several months to learn broad basic technique and about 8 songs, and for a while I held the same expectation as a beginning drummer. Yet, in the time it took me to learn broad basic technique and 8 fife songs, I barely learned the seven stroke roll and Yankee Doodle (my respect for our drummers has been increasing ever since my first lesson on snare). It is harder to play one note on the fife than it is to play one beat on the drum, but beyond that, learning drum has presented many more obstacles than fife. As a fifer, I paid little attention to dynamics, but quickly learned that a drummer pays as much attention to dynamics as a fifer pays to which note s/he is playing! The accenting of certain beats gives certain notes tremendous emphasis; without accenting, rudi-

ments like the flamacue would be impossible. Accents define the rhythm of entire songs.

I believe that the Stow Music Corps would benefit from more bilingual leadership. All too often, songs are chosen without significant drummer input. This is partly because there are fewer drummers than fifers (something I would like to see change, as I have attended several practices without a single drummer), but also because our music masters and practice leaders are traditionally fifers. Occasionally fifers choose songs which have non-colonial drum beats or no drum beat, forcing a compatible drum beat to be composed (this was often done by Richard Ruquist). Also, with the drum corps better represented in our leadership, drum sectional rehearsals might be arranged.

My brother and I attended the Middlesex County Volunteers Junior Fife and Drum Workshop on the seventh of February, 2009. Not only did we discover a program which can benefit many of our members in the years to come, but we also witnessed a style of rehearsal completely different from our own. Let me describe the atmosphere—each student knew s/he was working with the best fifers and drummers in the state and opened him/herself to learning as much as possible during that short Saturday. Discipline was at the core of the workshop. Every drummer and fifer participated loyally in his or her respective sectional, each of which was directed by a confident, unhesitating MCV instructor. Greater discipline in Stow's rehearsals will be difficult, as many of our leaders have sons and daughters in the ranks, but it is still worth striving for. There were no problems at MCV, perhaps because most of the students were learning from professionals from whom they would normally be asking autographs. By the time the sectionals convened for ensemble work (lead not by a fifer but by MCV's drum sergeant Mike Godin), the rewards of hard work were already showing. The advanced fife instructor marveled at how much her group improved after just a few hours of focus.

MCV's program also allowed me to observe the manner in which MCV conducts its drum sectionals. I accomplished this by attending a drum master class—the second phase of the day was a set of one hour master classes (you had to choose one to attend) such as *A Power Point History of Fife and Drum*, *How to stay energized during a long parade*, and even a *Fife Tuning* class. I attended the drum master class because

it would involve a presentation by the MCV drum line about how they practice during a normal rehearsal, as well as a drill on long rolls. With a clear goal for the group, Mike commented on each run of each song, and also directed the cycling or repetition of difficult measures. MCV uses cycling to denote the continuous repetition of a difficult passage until satisfaction. Sometimes, two drummers cycle a passage by themselves. Once they play perfectly in sync, a third is added; once they play in sync, that is, with the sound of a solo drummer, a fourth is added. And the process continues until the entire drum line can play the passage perfectly. Fifers give equal attention to detail, albeit with slightly different technique. First, all fifes are tuned at 444 megahertz. This may sound simple, but it took my group over an hour. Then, breath marks are written in to the song to be learned. For the actual "learning of the song", the intonation of each phrase is perfected.

Bear in mind that a leader's personal goal for a song determines what perfection will be. For example, there are always multiple ways to place breath marks, but no matter which way is chosen, everyone must do the same thing.

I highly recommend attending this workshop for all Stow fifers and drummers aged 18 years or younger. If we can incorporate what we learn at such workshops into our own rehearsals, we can double our productivity. I would further recommend any Stow instructor interested in learning about MCV's instruction style attend the workshop as an observer.

Having played with MCV, as well as being a wonderful instructor, Peter Sullivan is a teacher worth making an extra effort to work with. Right now, a few lucky drummers who arrive at practice at six o'clock are the only ones with the privilege of working with him! But I must warn anyone thinking their first drum lesson will be fun and easy—I've been there, it's harder than it looks!

The Stow Musket: Part One

By Rick Lawson

Past Captain Ralph Bernklow brought to our attention last year that an artifact of historical importance was once again up for sale. This is an actual musket from the period that, by all indica-

tions, most likely made the trip on April 19th 1775 to Concord and beyond.

Steven and Abigail Stow moved to the town in 1756, they had 5 children one of whom is the lineage that passed down the musket throughout the years. In recent history it hung in the house of Alexander Gray who was a friend of the reformed Minutemen Company and he would loan it out to Ralph and others to carry on the Trail March in the 1970s.

Ralph told me the other night over the phone of his cleaning and repairing the musket, also his assisting Alex in documenting the provenance of the artifact. When Alex went to sell it unfortunately the Company was not in a position financially to secure its purchase. The musket, known as "the Stow Musket" was sold to Thomas Wolfe. When Tom died last year his brother Bill contacted the Stow Minutemen to see if we were interested in purchasing it from the Estate.

Ralph, Linda and I have been working since then on trying to find ways to raise the money needed to make sure that this important part of Stows history is not lost again to a collector. Our hope is to bring the musket home again to Stow and to put it up on display in either the Library or Town Hall. We have gotten a couple people and groups so far to agree to support this effort. But we still have a ways to go to meet our target amount.

There will be more information on our fundraising efforts in the near future. We will also be asking for creative ideas on ways to raise the money that we need. So if anyone has any ideas, please do not hesitate to contact the Musket Committee: Linda, Ralph, and myself.

The Banyan

By Linda Stokes

What is a banyan you ask? An epiphyte fig tree? A rock band? A reality television production company? Yes, it is all of those things, but more importantly (at least from our perspective) it is an article of clothing worn by 18th century men. It was influenced by Persian, East Indian, and Turkish clothing, which was all the rage. There also was probably a Japanese influence, with some being cut in kimono style or used Japanese style prints. 18th century Americans were very interested in fashionable dress and wanted an exotic or opulent look with this article of clothing.

It was worn at home as a sort of dressing gown or informal coat over shirt and breeches. And it was much favored by the intellectuals of the day as can be seen by the following quote by Benjamin Rush:

Loose dresses contribute to the easy and vigorous exercise of the faculties of the mind. This remark is so obvious, and so generally known, that we find studious men are always painted in gowns, when they are seated in their libraries.

The pattern used was usually a loose T-shape coat, but it could also be a long simplified coat. It could be made of cotton, linen or silk; frequently the material was patterned or with a flowered design. Rather than wearing a wig, the preferred head gear was a turban like cap or something similarly exotic, especially to cover a head shaved for a wig. It could also be worn with a negligee cap. According to Colonial Williamsburg, these caps were usually cut in wedge shaped quarters with a turned up brim and were frequently embroidered. These caps are commonly available from sutlers.



Nicholas Boylston in a brilliant green banyan and a cap, painted by John Singleton Copley, 1767

Look for them in movies: Tom Wilkinson as General Cornwallis in *The Patriot*; John Malkovich has several scenes in a banyan in *Dangerous Liaison*; John Hurt as the Marques of Montrose in *Rob Roy*; and Julian Sands as Louis XIV in *Vatel*.



Banyan worn by George IV c1780-1790 when he was Prince of Wales (Royal Pavilion & Museums)



Costume sketch from Dangerous Liaisons

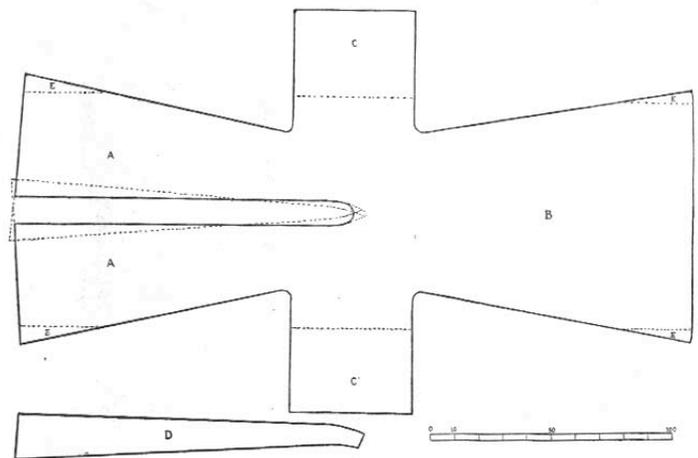


Fig. 30
 Patron d'une robe de chambre en une seule pièce, sauf les bouts de manche, les deux devants et les chanteaux. — A.A. les devants. — B. le dos. — C.C'. les bouts de manches. — D. un des deux devants rajoutés. — E les chanteaux.

Pattern for a Banyan

Bibliography:

- <http://www.costumes.org/History/100pages/BANYAN.HTM>
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banyan_\(clothing\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banyan_(clothing))
- <http://www.history.org/history/clothing/men/mglosary.cfm>

Future Events

(More detailed event info can be found at www.stowminutemen.org)

May

Friday, May 1, and Saturday, May 2 – Wm Diamond Tattoo and Muster

Saturday, May 16 – Stow Springfest Parade and Fair

Sunday, May 17 – Newton Veterans' Parade

Monday, May 25 – Boylston Memorial Day Parade

Monday, May 25 – Stow Memorial Day Parade

June

Friday-Sunday, June 5-7 - Tewksbury Encampment

Friday-Sunday, June 12-14 – Hartwell Tavern Encampment, MNHP

Saturday, June 20 – Boxboro Fifer's Day Parade

July

Saturday, July 4 – Needham Fourth of July Parade

August

Friday-Sunday, July 31-August 2 – Old Sturbridge Village Encampment

Stow Minutemen Company

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