



The Stow Minutemen

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Captain's Notes

...the view from the front

The Year in Review

This was a very busy year for the Company. There were several new events, we've had some new faces in key positions, and our membership has grown and shrunk all at the same time. Needless to say it has been a very interesting year! I would like to thank each and every one of you who have turned out for events, also those who helped out behind the scenes with transportation and nourishment for weary soldiers.

There were some rather nice new events that I'm hoping we'll be able to do again in the future. The Hartwell Tavern weekend in conjunction with the Park Service was "edutainment" at it's best. When you think of the numbers of people that stopped by that weekend and talked with and/or gawked at us ... people from all over the world. If the rest of the membership agrees, I'd like us to try and make this an Annual Event that can only grow and improve as time goes on.

The other event that jumps to mind was the Old Sturbridge Village Redcoats and Rebels weekend with their breathtaking, historical site where you could really lose yourself in the character and the timeframe. I thought the Parade Through the Ages was rather funny!! Hopefully that event won't be going away like the rumors I've heard will lead us to believe.

I must say that I'm especially pleased of how our musicians (young and elder) performed at all events and parades. This was my first time in several years going to the Diamond Muster in Lexington and listening to our group performing against the likes of MCV and others, and holding our own made me proud to call myself a member of this unit. Likewise at Sudbury, where some of the best units on the Northeast come to play and we

were just as good as any other groups out there. You should all be very proud of all your hard work and what you've accomplished this past Season.

We had HUGE turnouts for nearly every parade event, at times reaching numbers of "feet-on-the-street" not seen since the hey days of the Company back around and after the Bicentennial. We looked good, we sounded good, we were in step, safe and having fun. Most of you spend a lot of the time while on parade concentrating on your music, trying to stay in step, etc ... I have the luxury to look around and see the responses we get from the crowd and there wasn't one time this year that comes to mind where we didn't leave them clapping and asking for more!

We' will be having our Annual Meeting in a few short weeks and I'm hoping that people will be enthusiastic with ideas for the upcoming Season, for directions they'd like to see the group go and also to help the Company recruit new Members and continue to grow as a Unit.

As always, I remain your most humbles and obedient servant,

Rick Lawson, Captain.

Upcoming Events

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

JANUARY

TBD - Annual All-Company Meeting, location to be announced

Ancient roots of drumming

By Richard Runquist

In archeology, drumming is primarily associated with the Goddess religions that worship nature. But prehistorically drumming was practiced by every culture. Drumming in its highest form at that early time was practiced by Shamans, and as such came to be associated with the supernatural.

Then along came rational thinking and the Father God religions, excluding those that have lesser Gods and Goddesses. The pure father god religions were a reaction to the perceived superstitious nature of the Goddess religions. Shamans were essentially outlawed. A commandment in the Hebrew religion for instance is to avoid any contact with the supernatural or those that engage in such practices. An aspect of this was to avoid drumming.

The Greeks adopted a compromise solution. The Greeks put a value on prophecy, which of course was the domain of the Shaman. So they allowed two female cults to drum into trances and warn the Greeks of the future. No one else was permitted to drum. The Romans adopted Greek practice at first. But over the centuries, they conquered so many primitives who had a drumming culture, that drums finally became a military device for marching in step. Probably not used for other types of signals as voice commands can be heard over the clash of sword and armor. That's an interesting question.

But when Christianity became a state religion in Rome, drumming was again banned as it was the voice of the devil. So drumming was abolished in the portion of Europe controlled by Rome at the time of Constantine up until the Fall of Rome. However, the various tribes that migrated to Europe from the east, the Goths, Franks, Huns, etc., all had a drum culture to begin with, as did the native Celts.

After the fall of Rome, Europe broke into kingdoms with the centers of culture being courts. Here the traditions of the bard and jester developed. The pipe and tabor jester played the pipe or whistle with one hand while beating a snare drum with the other, and dancing with numerous bells attached to

arms and legs. This is one origin of rudimental drumming.

The other origin is the Turks during the crusades. They used various snare-less side and kettle drums to signal their troops in battle. The European troops returning from the crusades brought the Turkish drums and a desire to use them for military purposes, especially marching. Victory processions were important, and in England, only the best soldiers were allowed to drum as the troops returned home. This eventually developed into the bass drum tradition of Scotland and Ireland, and was brought to America.

It seems that in the 1300s and 1400s only snareless Turkish drums were used by the English, both side and bass drums. Not soon the continent. Bard culture flourished in southern France, then part of England, and spread to the rest of Europe. Apparently some of the jesters became quite competent musicians. They naturally found employment as military drummers, but on much larger drums than the tabor, and able to use both hands. In that environment drumming advanced rather quickly. The double stroke roll was an immediate result, as the jesters had been using double strokes with one hand all along; whereas in England, the bravest soldiers practiced single stroking, much like they fought on the battlefield.

Still the drum was primarily an aid to the march. It is said that no one stayed in step, anyway. That is, until the Swiss developed the drum into the brains of the pike phalanx. Swiss companies of 1000 soldiers, mostly with 20 ft. pikes, but also archers and musketry, and fife and drum, turned the pikes into an offensive weapon. Formerly it was purely defensive. But the Swiss learned to slowly charge the enemy, be it infantry or cavalry, with gather steps coordinated by the drum playing only on the step forward with the left leg, and the right leg stabilized; and not playing at all on the gather step, which brings the right leg up to the left. That allowed many soldiers to attack the same point and push through any point in enemy lines. By 1500 the Swiss were the most formidable force in Europe, and later as mercenaries spread fife and drum throughout Europe.

The origin of the drum rudiment was the possible patterns that could be played as the Swiss citizen volunteer stepped out with his

left foot. So most rudiments are one beat in length, like the paradiddle or double drag. Today the Stow Minutemen recreate a Swiss Charge Drumbeat to accompany the first tunes of their two standpieces, the tunes being My Dog and Gun in one and Gilderoy in the other.

Member Notes

Gary Langenwalter, our member out in the wilds of Portland, OR, recently published another book - this time a novel. [The Squeeze: A Novel Approach to Business Sustainability](#) is available from Amazon and from SME. Check it out!



Notes from the Stow Tavern, Part 3

By John Willoughby

Beer in Colonial Times

This is the third part of the series on colonial New England taverns and drink. In the first article we examined the colonial tavern and the important role it played in colonial life. The second article covered common drinks including cider, rum, wine, and mead. In this article we will now focus on beer.

We looked at how water was generally considered unhealthy (and for good reason) and how alcoholic drinks were considered healthy. Due to their production methods, alcoholic drinks were generally sterilized (unintentionally) which made them safe to drink. But the benefits of these drinks, especially beer, didn't stop there. Beer in colonial times was unfiltered and it was a very cloudy affair

full of dead yeast. Not too appetizing by modern standards, but the yeast slurry made it a very nutritious drink that helped provide protein, vitamins, and minerals to their often otherwise sparse diet.

While alcoholic drinks were consumed in great quantity by the colonials, beer was positively considered a staple of any diet. Ben Franklin once said that, "Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to enjoy life".

Beer and the army

We described in the first article in this series about how beer was a powerful inducement used to insure attendance at militia practices, fortunately one that was disbursed after target practice had concluded!

Beer was also a critical part of the army rations, and even prisoners were entitled to a beer ration as long as it was available. One of the first acts of the new Continental Congress, passed in November 4, 1775, specified that each man in the armed forces should receive a ration of one quart of beer or cider per man per day. Beer consumption by the army in the final days before the battle of Brooklyn Heights is estimated at almost a gallon per soldier per day.

What is Beer?

There were several types of beer in colonial times. The first distinction was made on the basis of the level of alcohol present in the beer. Small beer was a generic term for beer that was relatively low in alcohol and was intended as a table beer. It was typically produced and consumed within a week or two, aging only long enough to ferment. Another type of low alcohol beer was the "two penny" beer which was made from a second brewing of the grains used to make a strong beer.

Small beer was a staple in most meals served in most homes, and was often brewed at the house it was consumed in. Brewing beer, like baking bread, was part of the responsibilities of every housewife and was a regular activity in most homes.

"Beer" was a drink with a mid-level of alcohol, and "strong beer", as its name implies, was higher in alcohol. The exact alcohol content is unknown and there was certainly no actual

standard that was followed, but general estimates place small beer around 2.5% to 3% alcohol, beer around 3% to 6%, and strong beer over 6% (but no higher than 10%). Because strong beer was made by adding as much sugar (from whatever source used) as the yeast could use before shutting down, strong beer was also often a sweeter product. Modern American beer is typically 3%-4% by contrast.

What was it made from?

The key ingredients in any fermentation process are sugar and yeast. The yeast turns the sugar into alcohol and your drink is ready! The sugar, however, doesn't have to come from table sugar (which was scarce anyway) and was obtained from many sources. When we think of beer we usually think of malted barley. Malting was a process that got the barley itself to convert starches into sugars but we won't go into that here. Suffice it to say that malting was a fairly complicated process (for the time) and not usually done at home. Maltsters would set up an operation to perform this and would provide the malt to the breweries who would turn it into beer.

Although malted barley was the chief source of the sugar that provided the yeast with the material it needed to produce alcohol, it was sometimes difficult to obtain or afford. This was especially true during the difficulties with England when imports were first taxed, then boycotted, and finally interrupted altogether by war. Resourceful New Englanders turned to other sources for the sugar needed for brewing including molasses, corn, and even pumpkins.

Likewise hops, used to both flavor and help preserve the beer, were often scarce and substitutions were found here as well. Spruce was popular substitution for (and sometimes even an addition to) hops and both George Washington and Ben Franklin published recipes for beer that were based on molasses and spruce.

As well as being cloudy, beer in colonial times had little to no carbonation and would be considered flat by today's standards. It was also served relatively warm (and often actually warmed up as part of a mixed-drink). The colonials loved it, but it wouldn't be recognizable to a beer drinker of today and would probably be quite unappetizing to our modern tastes.

Sam Adams

One more note on beer: we can't talk about colonial beer without taking a moment to look at a modern day beer that claims colonial imagery as part of its identity. First of all, "Sam Adams: brewer, patriot" is the slogan of the Sam Adams beer company although it turns out that it is only partly correct. Sam Adams inherited a malt operation started by his great-grandfather Joseph Adams in the 1600's. Unfortunately he was never much of a businessman and abandoned the malting business in 1766 and ultimately turned his attention full time to the task of rebellion, which he did excel at. Enjoy the beer if you wish, but the colonial linkage is a bit thin at best.

Coming next...

Join us for the fourth and final article in this series where we cover the recipes used for popular mixed drinks.



Adjutant Notes

By Jenn Siegel, Sergeant Adjutant

Thanks to everyone for making this newsletter a fair success this year! Keep the submissions coming next year!