



# The Stow Minutemen

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## Captain's Notes

*...the view from the front*

### You're a WHAT?!?!?

"A Colonial Reenactor" I say, "you know, one of those people who dresses up in period clothing, carries a musket, marches around to fife and drum music!" Then the questions will usually come - How did you get involved in such a thing? Is it expensive? Do you make your own clothes? Etc... We've all heard them at one time or another, from time to time. So as I'm sitting here, electronic "quill" at my fingertips I got to thinking... How did I get involved in such a thing?

For me it started way back in 1974, I was 14 and had played percussion in stage bands in school since the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade. We lived in Acton Mass and with the Bicentennial happening in only a few years, groups all over the area were gearing up for the big festivities. My Music Teacher in the Jr. High knew a person in the Acton Minutemen Fife and Drum Corp... the Davis Blues they were called and got me in. I had always had a love of history, especially Colonial America. My father, younger brother and I would venture out to Lexington and Concord, or go to various museums here in New England or in eastern New Jersey where we had lived prior to moving to Mass. I had read *Johnny Tremain* (and seen the Disney movie by the same name), had read *Ben and Me* and various other books about the time period.

So I was outfitted with a rope tension drum, at least once a week we'd practice in the small building in West Acton that the Minutemen owned. Over the next couple years there were many Parades, the Isaac Davis Trail March to Concord, Battle "Reenactments", a Halftime program for the New England Patriots, various trips all over the region and beyond. We were an elite Corps of young musicians and a very large group indeed. We even played for then President Ford at the Old North Bridge!! Shortly after

that the group got smaller, many of my friends who were old enough joined the Minutemen with their fathers or older brothers... since my mother would certainly NOT allow me to do such a thing I started to get disenfranchised with the hobby and little by slow slipped away. Sometime in late 1978 they came looking for their drum, rust colored vest and drum sling.

Flash ahead to the early 90s, I'm living in Maynard Mass on Summer Street. Patriot's Day Monday comes then suddenly there's Fife and Drum music in the air, the smell of sulfur and people in the street at an ungodly hour! I asked my wife what it was all about; "Oh, it's the Minutemen from Stow, they come by here every year at this time." We get up and go to Concord to the Bridge and there they are again, the Stow Minutemen... along with (the MUCH smaller) Acton Minutemen and other groups from all over. The very next year I was fully dressed and ready to go greet them as they marched down Summer Street. Capt. Gary Langenwaller invited me to march along behind the group and we did. At breaks I spoke with some of the musicians and told them my "ancient" history with the hobby... sometime before the day was out Capt. Gary had signed me up and by Memorial Day I had a basic outfit, a rope tension drum, sticks and was attending regular music practices. Little by slow I got more gear, better clothes, learned more songs and by the very next Patriots Day I was the only drummer doing the Trail March as Sgt. Peter Sullivan was deathly ill with a flu and couldn't make it. Although the beat certainly wasn't as good as if he had been there, we made it to Concord none the less.

Now I look at the large tubs in my basement full of accoutrements or the half a closet full of Colonial clothing... I think of the 18-20 weekends a year that I'm dressed in wool, canvas and linen and the words of columnist Dave Barry come to mind - "It's a fine line between hobby and mental illness."

**I am a REENACTOR!!**

## Upcoming Events

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

### APRIL

Sat. 7th - Bedford Parade and Polecapping

Mon. 16th - Annual Patriots Day Trail March

## Paymaster Notes

### Dues Are Due

By Arch Owen, Sgt. Paymaster

Although a number of members have paid up their dues, some dues are still outstanding. So please send checks payable to "Sergeant Paymaster" at the following address:

Sergeant Paymaster  
Stow Minutemen  
PO Box 174  
Stow, MA 01775

Dues are only \$10 for an individual or \$20 for a family. Please include information on the names, addresses, and email addresses of all the members covered by the dues so that we can keep our membership rolls up to date.

If you are not sure if your Dues are paid up for the year, please do not hesitate to contact me at either [paymaster@stowminutemen.org](mailto:paymaster@stowminutemen.org) or [aaowen@alum.swarthmore.edu](mailto:aaowen@alum.swarthmore.edu).

If you do not send dues in a timely fashion... well... I will send the Sergeant Armourer to your house with instructions to.. to.. to.. to.. do something.

## To Anacreon In Heaven An Early Sobriety Test

By Linda Stokes, Sgt. Quartermaster

John Stafford Smith wrote the music for the song, "To Anacreon in Heaven," in 1771. It was written for the poem of the same name. The poem was written around 1770 by Ralph Tomlinson, who was the president of a social club in London called the "Anacreontic Society," to be used as the society's official drinking song.

The song gained popularity beyond the society after the lyrics were published in London in 1778/1779. In America, Robert Treat Paine used it for his ode, "Adams and Liberty – the Boston Patriotic Song." When Jefferson was elected, the melody was used again to celebrate our third president. By 1820, there were 84 songs written in the United States alone using this melody. No one had to worry about copyright laws!

When you hear the fifes and drums play the song, you will immediately recognize our National Anthem, *The Star Spangled Banner*. The lyrics for our anthem, as most of you know, were written by Francis Scott Key in 1814, during the War of 1812, while he watched the bombardment of Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland as a prisoner aboard a British warship. Originally published under the title, "Defense of Fort McHenry," the song gained popularity throughout the nineteenth century, but it did not become our official national anthem until 1931. The flag referred to in the song was the huge fifteen starred and fifteen striped flag flying over the fort. You can view the preservation of this flag at the Smithsonian's Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

Anacreon was a 5<sup>th</sup> century BC lyric poet of Greece, known for his poems on love and wine. The main purpose of the Anacreontic Society was to promote an interest in music. The society's membership was diverse, consisting of "peers, commoners, aldermen, gentlemen, proctors, actors, and polite tradesmen." After a concert and dinner, the society would entertain each other by singing amusing songs. "To Anacreon in Heaven" was frequently used as a sobriety test. If you could sing a verse of the notoriously difficult song (it has a range of one and a half octaves)

and stay on key, then you were sober enough to imbibe some more.

The next time you hear it, you might try singing the first verse of the drinking song:

To Anacreon, in Heav'n,  
Where he sat in full glee,  
A few sons of harmony,  
Sent a petition,  
That he their inspirer,  
And patron would be;  
When this answer arrived,  
From the jolly old Grecian,  
"Voice, fiddle and flute,  
No longer be mute.  
I'll lend ye my name,  
And inspire ye to boot...  
And, besides, I'll instruct ye,  
Like me, to entwine,  
The myrtle<sup>1</sup> of Venus,  
With Bacchus's vine."

<sup>1</sup>Myrtle was an emblem of love held sacred by Venus.

-From "A modest Collection of Traditional Songs of the Colonial Period" by Mark R.Tully [www.colonialmusic.org](http://www.colonialmusic.org)  
[en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

## Member Notes

**Paul Siegel**, Company Websmith, recently purchased a Long Land Brown Bess from Middlesex Village Trading and is quite excited to join the ranks of our musketeers.

## Quartermaster Notes

By Linda Stokes, Sgt. Quartermaster

As you prepare for our spring events, please return to the quartermaster (Linda Stokes 978-897-4322 or [fifer-linda@comcast.net](mailto:fifer-linda@comcast.net)) any clothing items you no longer need, so others can put them to good use.

## 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).

## **Future Events**

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

### **MAY**

Sat. May 5 - Lexington, MA - Diamond's Music Tattoo and Muster

Sat. May 19 - Stow Springfest

Sun. May 20 - Newton, MA - Veteran's Memorial Parade

Mon. May 28 - Boylston, MA - Memorial Day Parade

Mon. May 28 - Stow, MA - Memorial Day Parade

### **JUNE**

Sat. June 16 - Boxborough, MA - Fifer's Day Parade

Sat. June 16 - Lincoln, MA - Hartwell Tavern demonstrations

### **JULY**

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

### **AUGUST**

August 4-5 - Sturbridge, MA - OSV's Rebels and Redcoats weekend

**Stow Minutemen Company**  
**PO Box 174**  
**Stow, MA 01775**