You Say You Want a Revolution

By Barb Nicolls

The 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and Ken Burns's documentary about the Revolutionary War have piqued interest in our rebel/patriot ancestors. Here are brief profiles of some, but not all, of our great+grandfathers who wanted a revolution.

Ebenezer Cheney (Josiah Cheney, George Cheney, Jennie Cheney Beebe, Harriet Beebe Nicolls, Carl Nicolls)

Ebenezer Cheney was born Mar. 14, 1763 in Holden, Worcester County, MA. In the summer of 1779, 16-year-old Ebenezer enlisted at Holden in a company of MA militia, serving 5 months, and afterwards enlisted at least two more times in different companies. He served in RI, NY, and NJ for a total of about 16 months.

A descriptive list dated July 12, 1780 says Ebenezer was 17 years old and was 5' 8" tall with a light complexion.

Abner Gleason (Polly Gleason Nicolls, Seneca Nicolls, Simon C. Nicolls, Sylvester E. Nicolls, Carl Nicolls)

Abner Gleason was born Dec. 6, 1745 in Oxford, Worcester County, MA. Abner served 30 days in a company from Charlton, MA, that marched Sept. 27, 1777 to reinforce the Continental Army commanded by Maj. Gen. Horatio Gates after the clash with Lt. Gen. John Burgoyne at the Battle of Freeman's Farm near Saratoga Springs, NY, on Sept. 19.

Maybe Abner met Gen. Benedict Arnold before he became a turncoat or maybe he was there when Burgoyne surrendered on Oct. 17.

Thomas Grover Sr. (Thomas Grover Jr., Elsena Grover Cornwell, Maria Cornwell Cheney, Jennie Cheney Beebe, Harriet Beebe Nicolls, Carl Nicolls)

Thomas Grover Sr. was born c.1738 in Grafton, Worcester County, MA. He was captain of a company of minutemen militia in Montague, Franklin County, MA, which responded to the Apr. 19, 1775 alarm at Lexington over 75 miles away. Two months later he was 1st lieutenant of a company which on June 17, 1775 was at the Battle of Bunker Hill in Charlestown, MA. He served several times in different companies during the war.

However, Thomas is more famous, or should I say infamous, for what he did after the war. On Jan. 10, 1787, the governor of MA James Bowdoin issued the order that Thomas Grover of Montague be arrested because he was "dangerous to the said Commonwealth, its peace and safety." Thomas was one of dozens of leaders in Shays's Rebellion. Learning that an arrest was imminent, a county newspaper snarkily reported that Thomas "boldly put on his snow shoes and took to the woods." When his father-in-law Joseph Sherman died, Thomas wrote from "Ensurgants Paradise" that his circumstances made it impossible for him to be an executor of the will. Thomas Grover escaped arrest and was eventually pardoned.

Jacob Ludwick (Phebe Ludwick Moses, George Moses, Anna Maria Moses Thompson, Nancy Thompson McCoy, Smith McCoy, Ethel McCoy Nicolls)

Jacob Ludwick was born July 24, 1755. In 1853, his 59-year-old daughter Sarah Faulkner applied for a pension based on Jacob's service. She provided no details. She only recalled her father said he was in the Battle of Breed's Hill (aka

Bunker Hill), the Battle of Brandywine, and "others." It's highly unlikely he was at Bunker Hill in Charlestown, MA, 350 miles away from his home in Chester County, PA. However, it's possible he was at the Battle of Brandywine about 15 miles away.

I have no proof of Jacob's service and neither did his daughter. Her pension application was rejected, but it did provide important information about the Ludwick family.

William Nicolls Sr. (William Nicolls Jr., Simon Nicolls, Seneca Nicolls, Simon C. Nicolls, Sylvester E. Nicolls, Carl Nicolls)

William Nicolls Sr. is a mystery. I don't know when and where he was born, whom he married, or when and where he died. However, I do know that he was paid 3 shillings and 6 1/2 pence for his service Oct. 14-15, 1778 with the Western New Windsor Co. of NY militia. The company marched to what is now Deerpark, Orange County, NY, the day after it was attacked by Joseph Brant, a Mohawk who led numerous loyalist and Native American raids in the Mohawk Valley.

William Sr.'s son **Simon Nicolls** served in the Continental Army, and a company return states that Simon was born c.1752 in Walkill, which means the Nicollses were in NY much earlier than previously thought.

William Nicolls Jr. (Simon Nicolls, Seneca Nicolls, Simon C. Nicolls, Sylvester E. Nicolls, Carl Nicolls)

William Nicolls Jr. may've been born May 12, 1755 in NY. Like his father, William Jr. served in the Western New Windsor Co. of NY militia. On June 1, 1779, the company responded to the firing of Fort West Point's alarm gun after Gen. George Clinton captured nearby Fort Stony Point and Fort Lafayette. The company was then ordered to the road at the Forest of Dean in case the British advanced over land towards Fort West Point. Clinton never made it that far, and the company returned home June 10.

William Jr. was paid 17 shillings and 8 1/2 pence for his 10-day service along the Hudson River. Neither William Sr. nor William Jr. lived long enough to apply for a pension.

Peter Raab (Henrich Raab, Susanna Raub Spitler, Peter Spitler, Minnie Spitler McCoy, Ethel McCoy Nicolls)

Peter Raab was born c.1735. When joining the DAR and SAR, many have inexplicably claimed that the Henry Raub who served in Northampton County, PA, was our Peter Raab. Actually, our Peter Raab lived in York County, PA, and served in the Windsor Township PA militia. In 1938, his great-grandson Charles Raub applied to the War Department for a headstone for "Peter Robb," and this headstone is at Old Springfield Cemetery near New Middletown, Mahoning County, OH.

In 1777, Peter was fined 3 pounds and 10 shillings for not signing the pledge of association which declared support for the revolution. Did Peter become a rebel willingly or was he pressured?

Thomas Sawyer (Eunice Sawyer White, Laura White Mead, Harriet Mead Beebe, Earl Beebe, Harriet Beebe Nicolls, Carl Nicolls)

Thomas Sawyer was born Feb. 6, 1740 in Bolton, Worcester County, MA. He was a sergeant in a company of minutemen militia in Winchendon, MA, which on Apr. 20, 1775 marched to Cambridge, MA, the day after the Battle of Lexington and Concord. In 1778, Thomas lived in VT and was captain of a company of militia which helped Moses Pierson fortify his blockhouse in Shelburne, Chittenden County, VT. Before dawn on Mar. 12, 1778, the blockhouse was attacked and set on fire, beer being used to put out the flames when the water ran out. The colonists repelled the attack, and Thomas stripped the powder horn, belt, bullet pouch, and jeweled face piercings off the corpse of a Native American.

In 1913, a VT chapter of the SAR dedicated a marker commemorating the Battle of Shelburne. If you want to visit it, the coordinates are 44 21.757' N, 73 15.952' W. If you want to read about the battle, I recommend The 1778 Battle of Shelburne by Michael J. Haugh.

Waitstill Scott (Lyman Scott, Harriet Scott Cheney, George Cheney, Jennie

Cheney Beebe, Harriet Beebe Nicolls, Carl Nicolls)

Waitstill Scott was born c.1742. In September 1776, while living in Westmoreland, Cheshire County, NH, he was an ensign, the lowest rank of commissioned officer, in a company of NH militia that went to reinforce the Continental Army in NY. On Oct. 28, 1776, they were at the Battle of White Plains, Westchester County, NY, and were dismissed early in December. In May 1777, Waitstill was captain of a company of militia that marched to Ticonderoga, Essex County, NY, to reinforce the troops trying to hold the fort against Lt. Gen. John Burgoyne. The company was discharged June 17, 2 1/2 weeks before the Americans abandoned the fort without a fight.

On Oct. 29, 1960, a local DAR chapter marked Waitstill's grave at Spofford Cemetery in Chesterfield, Cheshire County, VT.

Isaac Train (Elizabeth Train Beebe, Charles Beebe Jr., Earl Beebe, Harriet Beebe Nicolls, Carl Nicolls)

Isaac Train was born May 22, 1759 in Adams, Berkshire County, MA. On Feb. 1, 1776, he enlisted in a company of MA militia and marched with 17 other recruits to Canada. After the failed Siege of Quebec, Isaac arrived home on his 17th birthday. Isaac enlisted many times afterwards in many companies, serving in NY and VT, at times under the command of Col. Seth Warner, a leader of the famous Green Mountain Boys. Isaac was in the Battle of Bennington in Walloomsac, NY, Aug. 16, 1777.

A descriptive list dated July 7, 1780 says Isaac was 5' 7" tall with a light complexion. In a 1905 letter, Isaac's great-granddaughter Maude Shallies reminisced that he had a sword hanging over the head of his bed and that she enjoyed counting the silver dollars in his wallet of pension money.



The Battle of Bunker Hill, a painting by Howard Pyle