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French and Indian Wars  
1754-1762

When, in 1765, the New Hampshire Assembly reluctantly passed an act of incorporation for Rumford, it gave one last vicious stab to the pride of our town, by defining her as a "Parish in the Town of Bow." In due time, however, this "Parish" was given the name of Concord in token, so it is said, of the never-failing unanimity of purpose with which our forefathers had met the persecution of their government. With the new name came an irritating change in town lines which was made in deference to the claim of Bow upon two triangular additions to the original rectangle of Pennycook Plantation. One of these triangles was on the east boundary, the other on the south and both were known as "Bow Gores." The sudden assignment of the Gores to Bow complicated both town and school affairs and served to promote confusion until 1804 when, by act of Legislature, they were restored to Concord.

Concord's first town meeting- the first in the community since 1749- was held on Jan. 21, 1766 and temporary town officers were chosen to serve until the regular town meeting in the following March. At that latter date, Dr. Ezra Carter was chosen moderator and Benjamin Rolfe, Esq. was elected town clerk. Once more the town was free to levy taxes and thus provide for its Minister's salary, its schools and other town obligations. During the years since the last appropriations for schools, there had been a healthy growth in child population and, moreover, a definite exodus of families from the village street to the farms on the outlying hills of the township. As a result of these new conditions, it was voted that <sup>a</sup> school should be kept "on the easterly side of the river," a second on the Contoocook (Boscawen) road and a third in the vicinity of the mills on Turkey river, for so long a period as the rates collectible in each neighborhood might warrant. These schools added to the one long since established midway the main street, indicate the first expansion of the town.

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While Rumford was carrying the burden of the Bow controversy, war was renewed between England and France with its inevitable threat to the frontier towns of New England. It was during his second trip to London that the Minister writing to his wife's brother in Woburn, said:

"The fate of Europe, as to peace or war, as yet remains doubtful. Vigorous preparations have been made and still are making; but many are confident matters will subside; but I expect, at least, that the poor frontiers in New-England will have a troublesome summer. I am in pain for my family as well as other friends exposed."

In anticipation of such need, the ranger and scout service was developed to its famous efficiency under Robert Rogers and the Stark brothers, John and William of Derryfield (Manchester). Rumford men aplenty were in this service and doubtless some of them helped to build, in 1759, the much needed road through the wilderness of Vermont, from <sup>Number Four</sup> No. 4 (Charlestown) to Crown Point. Until that was accomplished only Indian trails were available toward the west, in all the territory north of the Great Road through Massachusetts to Albany.

Troops from New Hampshire were seriously handicapped by this lack of roads and by hazy notions of the geography of the country. In the early summer of 1755—the time when Mr. Walker in London felt such concern for his family, an expedition was ordered to Crown Point to attack the French fortifications. Our town raised a company of eighteen men and Capt. Joseph Eastman, worthy son of Capt. Ebenezer, was in command. With a complement of sixty-five men from this vicinity, his orders were to proceed to the head waters of the Connecticut river in Coos, build a fort there and then to march to the rendezvous at Crown Point. This was supposed to be a direct route and it was fondly believed that the trip could be made, for the most part, by water.

So certain of the soundness of this plan were the leaders that

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Capt. Eastman's company in Col. Joseph Blanchard's regiment, was ordered to encamp at the headwaters of the Merrimack and there build the bateaux deemed essential for the remainder of the trip. There, on the site of the city of Franklin, the order was carried out and much time and provisions wasted. Then came an exhausting march through the wilderness to <sup>Number Four</sup> No. 4 (Charlestown), Seventeen or eighteen days after leaving the Merrimack, the company reached Deerfield, Mass. where they replenished supplies and eight days later they managed to reach Albany. There rations of bread, meat, peas and "rhum" for eight days were issued and they marched on to Lake Sacrament (the French name for Lake George) where they met the enemy and fought. The eight day trip was stretched to twenty-five days while rum ran low and sugar, flour and molasses vanished. The service of this company lasted from April to October.

Capt. Joseph Eastman's younger brother, Nathaniel, took part in the fight at Lake George and, although wounded in the knee, he continued to fight until left almost alone. Limping through the woods he was fortunate in finding and rejoining his company. After his return to his Rumford home, he proudly told how Dieskau, the French commander, wounded and taken prisoner during this battle, said of the Americans: "In the morning they fought like brave boys; at noon, like men; but in the afternoon, like devils!"

Most of the men in this company later enlisted in the Rangers where tough fibre, unconquerable spirit and experience in woodcraft were essential. The famous leader of the Rangers was Robert Rogers of Mountalona in Dunbarton who, as a youth in his teens, began scouting with Capt. Ladd. His earlier years had been spent in the woods and in familiar contacts with Indians. As he, himself, wrote: "I could hardly avoid obtaining some knowledge of the manners, customs and language of the Indians, as many of them resided in the neighborhood and daily conversed and dealt with the English."

Serving with distinction at Fort Edward, along the Hudson river and at Lake George and Lake Champlain, Rogers received his commission as captain this year of 1755 when he was twenty-four years old. His genius for scouting was recognized and the next year he was ordered to form an independent company of Rangers to be paid by the King. This was the nucleus of the famous Rogers Rangers in which nine companies were enrolled under Major Rogers. The boy who had travelled over the lonely trail from Mountalona to Rumford, to peddle his birch brooms to housewives, thus became the leader of gallant men who played an important part in saving North America to the British Crown.

Our picture shows Major Rogers in his Ranger uniform. He was an imposing figure whether in the forest with his Rangers or at Portsmouth among the aristocrats of that proud little town, for he was "six feet tall well-formed, fine looking and athletic." He was an elemental creature with great powers of endurance and a genius for leadership and devotion to his men which led him to heroic action. His virtues were compelling, his vices too many, but his contribution to American history must not be discounted by his Toryism during our Revolution.

The Starks were men of great experience in woodcraft and Indian encounter. In 1752 with David Stinson of Londonderry and Amos Eastman, of the Mill Farm on Turkey river, they set out for a hunting trip on Baker's river in the present town of Rumney. Peace having been declared, they felt no alarm upon meeting a party of ten Indians from St. Francis. As evening drew on, John Stark went into the woods alone to look at his traps: the Indians followed him and took him captive. As time went on, his companions felt alarm and started down river to search, William Stark going with Stinson in a canoe while Eastman walked along the river bank. Suddenly the Indians leaped out of ~~ambush~~ <sup>Eastman</sup> ~~ambush~~, took Eastman captive and shot at the canoe killing Stinson whom they later stripped and scalped. John Stark who was among the Indians, struck at a gun levelled at his brother and saved his life, so that he was able to escape in the

cance. John Stark and Amos Eastman were carried north on a journey of five or six weeks which ended at the Indian town of St. Francis thirty miles north of Connecticut lakes. Their welcome consisted in their being forced to run the gauntlet and young Eastman was brutally clubbed, but Stark snatched a club from a warrior and beat his way through with little injury. His boldness brought him a measure of respect from his captors, but they sold Eastman to a French master. It was Massachusetts which accomplished the deliverance of the two men by sending a delegation of men to St. Francis to redeem them and bring them home by way of Albany.

A number of Rumford men joined Rogers Rangers, among them being Abraham Bradley's grandson, Benjamin, who had just reached his majority. He was in the famous attack at St. Francis which destroyed the village and thus rid the Merrimack valley of fear of Indian attack. The Rangers marched from Ticonderoga over mountains and through swamp and forest. Finding the Indians in the midst of a "wedding frolic", the Rangers waited till dawn, when the village was deep in drunken sleep, and then attacked, killing about two hundred and burning the town. Five English prisoners were found in the village, quantities of plunder and, grim in its evidence, some six hundred scalps. Young Bradley led one of the attacking parties and charged the house where the dancing had taken place. As he smashed in the door, its hinges gave way and he plunged headlong among the sleeping savages, but before they could resist, all were killed.

Returning in November (1759) the Rangers, exhausted and destitute of food, struck the Connecticut river at Upper Coos which they mistook for the Lower Coos (Haverhill). Believing themselves well on their homeward way, they separated into groups that they might better forage for food, and Bradley with four or five companions, took a point of compass which he felt confident would bring them to his father's house within three days, if strength held out. None of the party ever reached home. Next

spring hunters in the location of present Jefferson, found a body which was believed to be that of Benjamin Bradley. Stephen Hoit, son of Abner Hoit, was a member of this group and during that spring his snuff box engraved with his name was found beside a little <sup>pile</sup> of clothing on an island in Winnepesaukee.

Better fortune attended David Evans of Rumford who was in the group which Rogers himself, led down the Connecticut to Number Four. It was a journey of tragic suffering with starvation so dreadful that he and others, were reduced to eating the flesh of those who perished by the way. Rogers's devotion to his men during this awful march was one of the fine and manly attributes of his strange career.

Another veteran of the Rangers was "Bill" Phillips, part Indian and part French, or possibly Dutch. With Rogers at Lake Champlain and Lake George, he was also in the St. Francis fight. On the return trip Maj. Rogers ordered him to lead a party of Rangers to Crown Point and he reached that goal without loss of a single man. Their hardships are recorded in Rogers's Journal, hunger reducing them to chewing the straps of their knapsacks and eating lumps from their tallow candles.

William Phillips (b. about 1719) seems to have lived at Northfield immediately following the war and there followed his trade as blacksmith. Then he moved to the neighborhood of East Concord, perhaps because he knew the Eastmans who were Rangers, and for several years he lived at the south corner of present Shawmut St. on an acre and a half of land. This place is described as being part of the northeast corner of Capt. Ebenezer Eastman's Mill Farm with a frontage of twenty-five rods on the Canterbury road, and on it was a small house and a barn. In 1776 Ebenezer Eastman Jr. sold the place to Phillips and about that time Ebenezer's daughter, Eleanor, was married to Phillips. The marriage took place at the nearby tavern of Lieut. John Chandler and there is a hint of <sup>the</sup> sensational in the record that it was on "a forged license." The ceremony was per-

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formed by a justice of the peace, Esq. Samuel Fowler of Boscawen, who had married the aunt of Eleanor, the widow of Dr. Ezra Carter.

Phillips added to his land enough acres to make a small farm and he ran a smithy near his house. The romance, if romance it were, was brief. In 1784 the home was broken up and Phillips sold the place. The original deed is in the N.H. Historical Society, signed thus:

"William Phillips  
Her  
Eleanor X Phillips  
Mark "

It was the time of the Shaker hysteria in Concord and converts had been holding meetings with their religious "dances", in the Phillips home. Eleanor was a devotee but "Bill" refused to join in, so his wife left and, with her sister, joined the Shaker colony in Canterbury where she died more than thirty years later. Meanwhile, "Bill" Phillips, sturdy old Ranger, degenerated and died a pauper, allegedly a hundred years old, in 1819.

Eleanor's brother, Stilson Eastman, was only nineteen when he fought as a Ranger under Lieut. John Stark at Ticonderoga. In his later years he used to tell how Maj. Rogers, twice wounded in the battle, was forced to give over command to Lieut. Stark and advised him to retreat. Eastman heard Stark shout: "I'll shoot the first man who retreats and I'll fight till dark!" Even as he spoke, a ball shattered his gun, but he jumped at a falling Frenchman, seized the enemy gun and continued the fight. Another tale of Eastman's concerned the cow kept for the benefit of Gen. Amherst, British commander at Crown Point. One day she strayed away and Stilson found her to the vast relief of the General who rewarded him by ordering that Eastman's canteen be filled with milk. As Stilson told the story, he saw to it that the cow was induced to wander frequently, with satisfactory results to himself.

During the Revolution Stilson Eastman saw service and brought home as a trophy of Burgoyne's surrender, a beautiful Hessian rifle which he contrived to substitute for his own after the enemy stacked arms.

Returning from the latter war, it was voted by the Proprietors in December 1781, that he be allowed to pitch his lot on the common land opposite present Clinton St. in East Concord, where he had previously made a settlement. Unfortunately his was "not a strictly sober life" and disaster befel him in the loss of his farm. In his old age he and his wife moved to Rumford, Me. to live with a son, and there he became converted under the preaching of a missionary. When ninety years old he would ride to meeting with his devoted wife on the pillion behind him. He lived into his one hundredth year, but counted his age only from that day when he was "born again" out of a reckless life into a new life of Christian faith and peace.

Daniel Abbot, son of Dea. George Abbot, had memorable experiences with the Indians. At the age of eighteen he enlisted for the Crown Point expedition (1756) ~~when he was eighteen years old~~. Three years later he enlisted again and marched with his corps to join the army at Quebec. During his first enlistment he was taken captive, but being a lusty youth, he entered into every activity which the warriors considered manly. So cleverly did he imitate the Indians that they offered to adopt him and train him to be a chief and, having thus won their confidence, it was easy to make his escape. Winter came and the savages had amongst their plunder, several pairs of skates which they could use but clumsily. The camp lay on Lake Champlain and Daniel besought them to let him try the ice, pretending as he fastened the skates that he was as clumsy as they. Watching carefully until he saw that their attention was distracted, he speeded away behind a point of land and, putting forth every bit of his strength, escaped. Reaching the southern end of the lake, he made his way safely to Albany and thence returned to his Concord home.

During his second enlistment, when the company was near the Canadian border, Daniel and a fellow soldier were detailed for scout duty. They ran into a party of Indians who brutally killed his companion before Daniel's very eyes. He, himself, was taken captive to an Indian village

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and there found four captives whom he knew. Again he played his part with all boldness and with success. The chief who had lost his own son, adopted Daniel, but unfortunately, he was forced again and again to witness horrible torture of white prisoners whom he was unable to protect. At the end of a year he was sold with other captives to the French, and by them exchanged for French prisoners held by the English. Daniel Abbot's sedate record as a farmer in West Parish belongs to a later chapter.

Another member of Rogers's Rangers was John Shute, son of pioneer Jacob Shute. In 1760 he and Joseph Eastman 3rd volunteered with two other scouts to carry despatches from Gen. Amherst at Crown Point, to Gen. Murray at Quebec—a five hundred mile journey through the wilderness. Early in the trip there was disaster when, in attempting to cross a river by means of hastily built rafts, one outfit was swept over falls and through long rapids. The two men on this raft, stripped and swam for their lives but lost all their clothing and provisions and equipment. Shute and his companion, Eastman, divided their clothing and food to share with the unfortunates, and then all four held a parley to decide whether to continue the mission or return.

They decided to push on and for days the travelling was weary, through swampy country and on short rations. Finally on a Sabbath morning, they heard church bells and following the sound, they saw from ambush, Canadian villagers going to a Catholic chapel. Waiting till the service had begun, the famished Rangers slipped out of concealment and raided the empty houses for food. Following a foot path through the woods they came upon a log house of some pretension and breaking into it, they found a huge chest full of elegant dresses. Impishly they helped themselves and put some of the gowns to good use. John Shute contrived a frock for himself and took another dress of finest silk which he later brought home to Concord. The like of it was never before seen in the town.

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Foraging as they tramped, the Rangers finally came to the top of a high hill and for the first time gazed upon the great St. Lawrence river. Near at hand they saw also a large encampment of regulars but could not determine whether it was friend or foe. One of the Rangers risked his life by going alone to a sentinel and, with great joy, found him to be a British soldier. The four Rangers were received with utmost hospitality and sent by boat on the twenty mile trip down river to Quebec. Arriving at night, they slept on the kitchen floor at Gen. Murray's headquarters until the morning brought the opportunity to deliver their despatches in person to the General. Ordered to wait until the army moved on to Montreal, when they arrived in that town they found Maj. Rogers and their own corps and witnessed the final surrender of Canada to the British on Sept. 8, 1760. The long and cruel struggle for supremacy in North America was at an end.

After such thrilling experiences, John Shute returned to his father's farm which extended along the north side of present West St. from the main street to the Country road (now South St.) He married Anna Colby, the daughter of Lot Colby at Eleven Lots and perhaps the bride wore the French silk gown at the wedding. John Shute inherited the farm and there the couple raised a family of nine children. He was a steady, hard-working citizen, but now and then his old love of the woods seized him and, alone except for his dog, he made long hunting trips through northern New-England.

Shute's companion Ranger, Joseph Eastman 3rd (b. Salisbury, Mass, 1720) seems to have moved to Boscawen before their mission to Quebec. Following the Indian attack at Stevenstown (Franklin) when Mrs. Call was massacred, Eastman entered service under Col. Blanchard that very year of 1754. Three years later he enlisted in the Rangers and served until the end of the Indian wars. He married Elizabeth Jackman and in 1758 she bore him a son, William, who was an early settler at Horse-hill. A second wife

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was Abigail Eastman, daughter of Joseph, Jr., and in 1769 or thereabouts they returned to Concord where Dea. Eastman died in 1815 at the age of ninety-five. In that day and generation the various Joseph Eastmans had much ado to preserve their identity and even after his death, his relict was known as "Widow Deacon Joseph Eastman".

One last tragic event closed Rumford's experience with this era of war, when a soldier named Nutter, seeking his home after distant service, reached the Contoocook river at Mast Yard. Weakened by starvation so that he could no longer crawl, he managed to collect a few sticks of drift wood and clung to them in an attempt to float down river. Below Broad Cove he crawled ashore, perhaps lured by smoke from a farmhouse chimney on Carter hill. Struggling on until utterly exhausted he then lay down under a little bank to die. Some good Samaritan found him and carried him up the steep hill to Enoch Webster's house which stood near present four corners on Carter hill. Life was too far spent and the soldier died. A little brook on the farm of Ezra Abbot in the neighborhood, was thereafter called Nutter brook.

Only a few of the Rumford men who made brave contribution to the victory of England over France are mentioned here by name. Bouton lists others and some are unrecorded, but the service of all enters into the sum total of valor and devotion which provided an inheritance for succeeding generations.