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Colonel Thomas Nixon, Jr.

Thomas Nixon, Jr. (1762-1842) was the nephew of one of the first Framingham settlers, John Nixon. John settled in an area, just north of Nobscot Mountain that is today part of Sudbury. John Nixon volunteered for the French and Indian war as well as serving directly with George Washington before and during the American Revolution. Thomas Nixon, Sr, the brother of John Nixon, as well as his young son Thomas Nixon, Jr. both served under the very famous General John Nixon and it is therefore the reason we can trace the military life and whereabouts of Thomas Nixon Jr. throughout his service in the American Revolution.

- Thomas Nixon, Jr. enlisted in the Continental army 1775 at the age of thirteen. Although a young age to be in military service, it was common for teenage boys between fourteen and sixteen to enlist as fifers and drummers.
- As part of Captain David Moore's Sudbury Company, he saw action at Lexington and Concord (April 1775)
- Enlisted with his father, Thomas Nixon, Sr. right after the battle of Lexington and Concord and officially became part of (his uncle) John Nixon's brigade.
- Served in Boston and was part of the siege of Boston (Breed's Hill) until the British were forced to leave.
- Served under General George Washington's command in New York and helped reinforce the army at Fort Ticonderoga.
- Thomas Nixon, Sr. was injured and his son was asked to escort his father home to Framingham.
- Both were honorably discharged in December, 1780.
- Thomas Nixon, Jr. re-enlisted 1782-1783 (20 years old at the war's end)
- Young Thomas Nixon attended surveying school and worked with a group of surveyors who were assigned the task of parceling out land to those veterans returning from war as payment for their service.
- Married Lydia Hager and built his house on Edmands Road that is still standing today. They had four children: Warren, Otis, Suky, and Reny.
- Warren also took up surveying and became a prominent surveyor in the area.(We have a number of his surveying tools). He also is credited to having drawn the first accurate map of Framingham in 1832.
- After Lydia died, Thomas Nixon, Jr. married the widow, Sarah Stone. Thomas is buried in the Main St. cemetery.

The Tune Book

The importance of this tune book belonging to the young Thomas Nixon cannot be underestimated. It is through these first-hand accounts that we can put together information in regarding to camp life of the colonial military as well as military procedures during the American Revolution. This book allows us to know first-hand of the revolutionary music exactly as it would have sounded and played in 1776.

The role of a fifer or drummer was an essential part of communicating instructions between and among the troops, whether in battle or during time in camp.

Songs were used for: **Drum beats, Duty calls**, special occasions such as military funerals, ridiculing war prisoners, and entertainment for dancing and jigs.

- There are 104 pages containing 143 tunes in his book.
- The songs help us understand where young Thomas Nixon was stationed.

Examples:

“Last Monday I sailed from York”

“March to Boston”

“Fair well to Peekskill”

- Thomas probably came into possession of the music book via the original owner, John Long, a soldier from New York who may have bought it as an empty music book in 1776. John and Thomas may have served together in Connecticut and therefore probably came into Thomas’ possession in 1777 or 1778.
- Original pages also served as instruction pages with fingering diagrams.
- John Long copied some military tunes but starting on page 62, it is thought through handwriting analysis, that Thomas began his own contributions of copied songs.
- It also looks, through handwriting analysis that Thomas was writing down songs from other fifers by ear and not necessarily documenting titles correctly. There are fun spelling errors to read.
- In some cases, it appears that songs were hastily written with ‘crooked scrawling’, perhaps believed to be written by firelight, during the actual battle campaigns.
- Yankee Doodle is found on page 95!
- Other songs were copied after the war as well, including many dance songs, as well as “God Save America” which is our “My country tis of thee”.

Notes taken in part from:

“The Talk on Thomas Nixon, Jr’s Tune Book” by Anne Livermore Rookey