

NEWBURY AND NEWBURYPORT IN THE LEXINGTON FIGHT

[The following article, prepared by Miss E.A. Getchell and read before the April 19, 1894 meeting of the Historical Society of Old Newbury, is taken from Putnam's Monthly Historical Magazine, by Eben Putnam, Salem, Mass.]

The spirit which pervaded the American colonies during the few years preceding the breaking out of hostilities which led inevitably to the war of the Revolution, was as fervid in Newbury and Newburyport as in any other section of the country.

In the year 1772 Newburyport held a meeting Dec. 23, and Newbury Dec. 29, and chose committees, the former of twelve persons and the latter of sixteen, "to take into consideration our publick grievances, and the infringement of our rights and liberties," and to report, etc.

The following month adjourned meetings were held to hear the reports of these committees, which were accepted and ordered to be entered on the town records, there to stand as a lasting memorial of "the sense they have of their invaluable rights and of their steady determination to defend them in every lawful way as occasion may require."

Before the year was out the good people of the town had opportunity to back their words with deeds. Let it be remembered that British tea was destroyed in Newburyport a week or ten days before the event of a like nature in Boston; but Market square is a much humbler locality than Boston harbor, and so the trumpet of Fame has been silent over it.

In the summer of 1774 meetings were held in Newbury and Newburyport to take into consideration certain letters sent from the committee of correspondence in Boston relating to the proposed general congress of the colonies "to consider and advise on the present distressed state of our civil and commercial affairs." Later on the town of Newbury chose the Hon. Joseph Gerrish, and Newburyport Captain Jonathan Greenleaf as their respective representatives.

In the latter part of October, 1774, the town of Newburyport held a meeting and "voted that all the inhabitants be desired to furnish themselves with arms and ammunition, and have bayonets fixed to their guns, as soon as may be."

We can readily imagine the martial activity aroused by this order. In the long winter evenings what furbishing of muskets and old King's arms, moulding of bullets, and repairing and replenishing of powderhorns! How the ramrods were looked to, the locks oiled, furnished with new flints, and manipulated until every part worked with all possible smoothness!

The old grandsire in the chimney corner, roused by the bustle to the remembrance of the warlike doings of his youth, would recount to the eager urchins crowding the settle-bench tales of the great struggle between France and England for supremacy in America, and perhaps the thrilling stories handed down by his father of Indian warfare and alarms.

The women of the household, listening as they plied the cards, or drove the flax wheel, may have softly sighed over the prospect of anxiety and privation which unfolded itself for the future, the reality of which lingered in the memories of the oldest among them, no doubt; but the sturdy spirit which was theirs by inheritance would have scorned to shrink at sacrifice. So to drive away unwelcome thoughts, they were fain to debate whether the Liberty tea, so called, was really composed of raspberry leaves or some other herb, and what could be done to eke out the supply of molasses for the summer.

(continued on page 10)

