



BELLINGHAM HISTORICAL COMMISSION, PUBLISHER

# CRIMPVILLE COMMENTS

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## CELEBRATING THE SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In 1837 Ralph Waldo Emerson coined the phrase “Shot Heard Round the World” to describe the opening shots fired at the Battles of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775, which marked the start of the American Revolutionary War, the American colonies’ fight for independence from Great Britain.

Our next two issues of the *Crimpville Comments* will be dedicated to the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution, with information about Bellingham area people and their stories during that time.

In the fall of 1974, the editors of the *Crimpville Comments* wrote to the Massachusetts Archives to see if there was a muster roll of the men who marched from Bellingham on that fateful day in the history of our great country.

A copy of the original document is shown on page 2. In 1968 the document was transcribed by Francis Donovan. We have re-transcribed the document to standardize the formatting and included it between pages 3 and 4. The document outlined the names of the men who served and the number of days they served. It also recorded that they all traveled 64 miles from home at a time when very few people ever ventured more than a few miles from where they were born. Also recorded was the wages that were due to each man who served. See the next page for more information about the wages.

In response they received a detailed Muster Roll, stating that on April 19, 1775 a Militia Company marched from



*By the rude bridge that arched the flood,  
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,  
Here the once embattled farmers stood,  
and fired the shot heard 'round the world.*

Bellingham, in the Colony Service, under the command of Captain Jefse Holbrook. The names of those on the roll are: Captain Jefse Holbrook; Lieutenants Luke Holbrook and Josh Phillips; Seargeants Aaron Holbrook, Elias Thayer, and Nicks Cooke; Corporals Ezek Cooke, Silas Thayer, Jeobez Metcalf, and Stephen Holbrook; Privates Levi Rockwood, Rob Smith, Jr., Asahel Taft, Cyrus Thompson, John Upham, Abner Wight, Sam Pickering, Amos Ellis, Elisha Hayward, Nathan Holbrook, Seth Holbrook, Henry Holbrook, Dennis Darling, Nath Scott, Nat Thayer, John

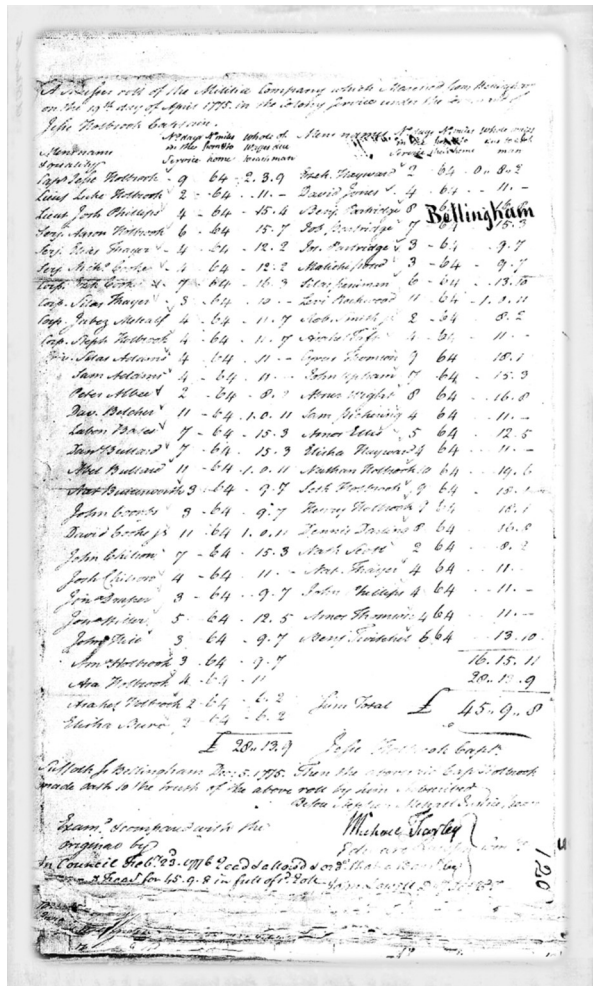
Phillips, Amos Thomson and Benj Twitchel.

*\*Please note: Spelling of names above are as they appear from the typewritten record from the Massachusetts Archives.*

Although we know the alarm was spread by the ringing of church bells and the shots of canons, we do not know who notified Captain Jefse Holbrook, but we do know that he mustered his men and they marched to the defense of Bellingham and to the birth of a new nation.

Militias were not new to this part of the world. In this eyewitness account by Dutch secretary of the Colony of New Netherlands, Isaac DeRaisiers, written in 1627, he describes the Pilgrims “progressing” to church: “They assemble by the beat of a drum, each with his musket of firelock, in front of the captain’s door; they have their cloaks on and place themselves in order, three abreast, and are led by a sergeant... Behind them comes the governor in a long robe; beside him on the right hand, comes the preacher...and so they march in good order, and each sets his arms down near him. Thus they are constantly on their guard night and day.”

## BELLINGHAM'S REVOLUTIONARY WAR MILITIA



Revolutionary War Muster Rolls, 12:120, A Muster Roll of the Militia Company which Marched from Bellingham under the Command of Jesse (Jesse) Holbrook, Captain, April 1775. SC1/series 57x. Massachusetts Archives. Boston, Massachusetts.

This was the birth of the citizen-soldier, or “Minuteman” as they came to be known. Each town had an area set aside to drill the militia. All able bodied men from 17 to 60 years of age were required to serve in the militia and provide their own weapons as well. A father was responsible for providing arms for his sons until they reached the age of 21.

Only doctors, clergymen, public officials, school teachers, and those with “defect of mind, failing senses or impotence of Limbes” were exempt. They drilled at least once a week, beginning in the early morning with roll call and prayer, followed by close-order drill, the manual of arms, and other formations, all to the accompaniment of a drum.

With that training, it is no wonder that so many men were able to answer the call to fight. Bellingham sent 54 men. The muster notes that all of the men served at least two days, and some as many as 11 days. This is not to say that is all they served, but records the number of days served in response to the call for militias on April 19, 1775.

Research has revealed that the Burr family of Bellingham, the Cox family of Mendon, and Hazel Forsberg of Upton are all descendants of John Chilson who answered that call. Sergeant Nicholas Cook, Jr. was the son of Deacon Nicholas Cook who was the first signer of the petition founding the Baptist Church in Crimpville (on High Street, Bellingham) in 1737. David Jones was the person who later, gave the land for the building of the Town Hall.

The wages that are recorded on the muster roll are recorded in pounds, so the Captain was the highest paid at 2 pounds, 3 shillings and 5 pence (which roughly converts to \$555 in 2025 US dollars) and the Privates who only served two days were the lowest paid at 11 shillings 9 (which roughly converts to \$136 in 2025 US dollars).

## SMALLPOX HOSPITAL IN BELLINGHAM

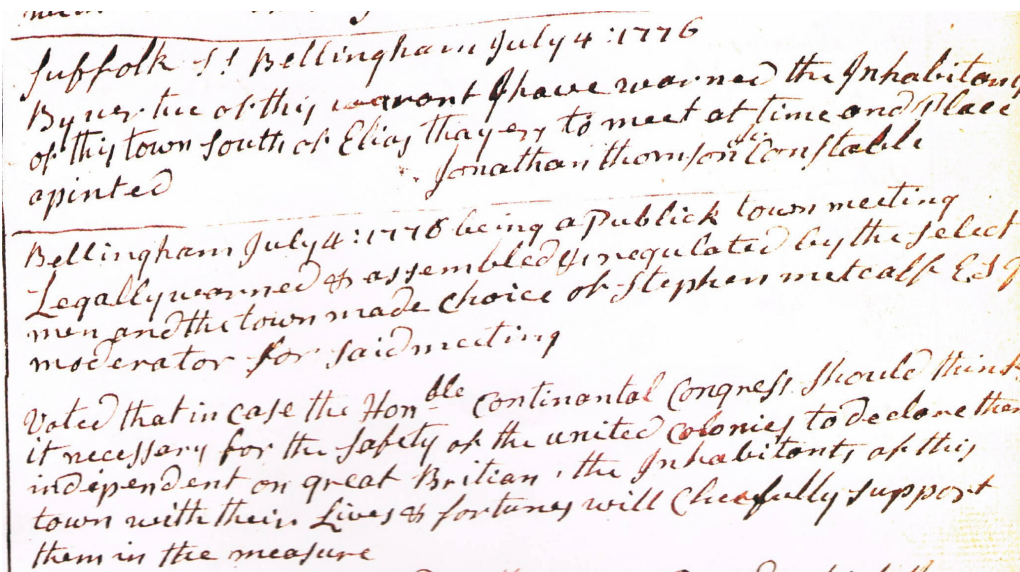
In the midst of the excitement and distress of the war, in April of 1777, a prominent citizen, Sylvanus Scott and his wife died of smallpox. The next month the town voted to open a smallpox hospital in the home of John Coombs. The selectmen were directed to provide a doctor and a nurse and people were inoculated, stayed for one week, and paid a fee of \$7 or \$8 (over \$200 today).

Interestingly, town records indicate that the town voted that any person with smallpox was forbidden in the house of Daniel or Silas Penniman, and that any person who did would forfeit ten pounds to the Town Treasurer.

In May of the next year, the Selectmen issued a warrant for a special town meeting to see if the town would approve the building of a house of the land of John Metcalf for a place for town residents with smallpox.

## Bellingham Selectmen Disown England's Authority

According to research outlined in History of Bellingham 1719-1919, by George F. Partridge, on January 9, 1775 England's authority was promptly disowned in the following resignation of the Selectmen: "We the Subscribers Whose Names are hereunto affixed do of our own free Will and Accord freely and fully and absolutely resign and disclaim any Power or Authority We have held or might have, hold, use, possess or enjoy by Virtue of any Commission we have held under Thomas Hutchinson Esqr late Governor of this Province; And that for the future We Will not Exercise any Power or Authority by Virtue of the Same in Witness Whereof we have hereunto Set our hands..." Joseph Holbrook, Daniel Penniman and Jesse Holbrook.



The image shows a handwritten document, likely a copy of town meeting minutes, written in cursive ink on aged paper. The text is organized into three distinct sections, each beginning with a date and location: 'Suffolk St Bellingham July 4: 1776', 'Bellingham July 4: 1776', and 'Bellingham July 4: 1776'. The first section describes a town warrant issued by the selectmen to meet at a specific time and place, with Jonathan Thomson appointed as constable. The second section notes a public town meeting where Stephen Metcalf was chosen as moderator. The third section contains a resolution where the town voted to support the Continental Congress's declaration of independence from Great Britain, stating that the inhabitants would support the measure with their lives and fortunes.

Suffolk St Bellingham July 4: 1776  
By virtue of this warrant I have warned the Inhabitants  
of this town South of Eliot's to meet at time and place  
appointed Jonathan Thomson Constable

Bellingham July 4: 1776 being a public town meeting  
legally warned & assembled & regulated by the select  
men and the town made choice of Stephen Metcalf Esq  
moderator for said meeting

Voted that in case the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Continental Congress should think  
it necessary for the safety of the united colonies to declare them  
independent on great Britain, the Inhabitants of this  
town with their lives & fortunes will cheerfully support  
them in the measure

In 1776 the Town Warrant was under the new name, "The Government and People of Massachusetts Bay."

It stated: Voted that in case the Honorable Continental Congress should think it necessary for the safety of the united colonies to declare them independent of Great Britain, The Inhabitants of this town, with their lives & fortunes will cheerfully support them in the measure."

### Copy of the town meeting minutes from July 4, 1776

In September the Massachusetts House of Representatives resolved "that the towns consider whether they will give their consent that this House & Council enact a Constitution, and if they would direct that it be made public before being ratified by this Assembly."

When the royal authority came to an end, towns felt almost sovereign, like the Colonies of the Confederation before the adoption of the United States Constitution. They were not looking for a constitution made by any other authority than their own.

In May, Bellingham had instructed its Representative Stephen Metcalf to try for a more democratic government, more economical and closer to the common people. In October, it chose a special committee to reply to this resolve of the House, consisting of Dr. John Corbet, "Crownier" John Metcalf, Elder Noah Alden, Deacon Samuel Darling and Lieutenant Seth Hall, and voted to print their report. It was adopted by the town in December of 1776 and stated:

"We are of opinion that the settling a form of government for this State is a matter of the greatest Importance of a civil nature that we were ever concerned in and ought to be proceeded in with the greatest caution and deliberation. It appears to us that the General Assembly of this State have well expressed that power always resides in the body of the people. We understand that all males above 21 years of age meeting in each separate town and acting the same thing and all their acts united together make an act of the body of the people. We apprehend it would be proper that the form of government originate in each town, and by that means we may have ingenuity of all the state, and it may qualify men for public action, which might be affected if the present Hon House of Representatives would divide the State into districts about thirty miles diameter or less if it appear most convenient, so that none be more than fifteen miles from the center of the district, that there may be an easy communication between each town and the center of it's district, that no town be divided, and that each town choose one man out of each 30 inhabitants to be a committee to meet as near the center of the district as may be; to meet about six weeks after the Houses of Representatives have issued their order for the towns to meet to draw a form of government..."



*A Muster roll of the Militia Company which Marched from Bellingham on the 19th day of April 1775. In the Colony Service under the command of Jefse Holbrook Captain.*

Mens name & quality	No days in the Service	No miles from & to home	Whole of wages due each man	Mens name & quality	No days in the Service	No miles from & to home	Whole of wages due each man
Capt Jefse Holbrook	9	64	23.9	Ezek. Hayward	2	64	0.08.2
Lieut Luke Holbrook	2	64	.11.	David Jones	4	64	..11.
Lieut Josh Phillips	4	64	..15.4	Benj. Partridge	8	64	..16.8
Serj. Aaron Holbrook	6	64	15.7	Job Partridge	7	64	..15.3
Serj. Elias Thayer	4	64	..12.2	Jos. Partridge	3	64	..9.7
Serj. Nichs Cooke	4	64	..12.2	Malichi Pond	3	64	..9.7
Corp. Ezek Cooke	7	64	..16.3	Silas Penniman	6	64	..13.10
Corp. Silas Thayer	3	64	..10.	Levi Rockwood	11	64	..10.11
Corp. Jabez Metcalf	4	64	..11.7	Rob. Smith jr	2	64	..8.2
Corp. Steph Holbrook	4	64	..11.7	Asahel Taft	4	64	..11.
Priv. Silas Adams	4	64	..11.	Cyrus Thomson	9	64	..18.1
Sam Adams	4	64	..11.	John Upham	7	64	..15.3
Peter Albee	2	64	..8.2	Abner Wight	8	64	..16.8
Dav. Belcher	11	64	1.0.11	Sam Pickering	4	64	..11.
Laban Bates	7	64	..15.3	Amos Ellis	5	64	..12.5
Danl Bullard	7	64	..15.3	Elisha Hayward	4	64	..11.
Abel Bullard	11	64	1.0.11	Nathan Holbrook	10	64	..19.6
Nat Butterworth	3	64	..9.7	Seth Holbrook	9	64	..18.1
John Coorbs (Coombs)	3	64	..9.7	Henry Holbrook	9	64	..18.1
David Cooke jr	11	64	1.0.11	Dennis Darling	8	64	..16.8
John Chilson	7	64	..15.3	Nath Scott	2	64	..8.2
Josh Chilson	4	64	..11.	Nat. Thayer	4	64	..11.
Jona Draper	3	64	..9.7	John Phillips	4	64	..11.
Jona Miller	5	64	..12.5	Amos Thomson	4	64	..11.
John Hill	3	64	..9.7	Benj Twitchel	6	64	..13.10
Ama Holbrook	3	64	..9.7				16.15.11
Asa Holbrook	4	64	0.11				28.13.9
Asahel Holbrook	2	64	..6.2				
Elisha Burr	2	64	..6.2				
			<u>£28.13.9</u>				<u>£45.9.8</u>
							<i>Jefse Holbrook Capt.</i>

*Suffolk Js Bellingham Dec: 5.1775. Then the abovesiad Cap Holbrook made oath to the truth of the above roll by him Subscribed  
Before Stephen Metcalf Justice Peace*

*Exam.d & compared with the original by Michael Farley }  
Edward Rawson } Comtee.*

*Copied by  
T. Boneman  
1968*

*In Council Feby. 23d. 1776 Recd & allow'd and orde. that a Warr. be  
----- For 45-9-8 in full afra'd Roll  
John Lowell DpTSoApt -*

*Note - "f" & "j", old style - - translate "s" or "s"*

## GUARDIANS OF BELLINGHAM'S HERITAGE STORIES OF LOCAL PRESERVATIONISTS

*In our last issue we highlighted Ed Sawyer, Florence McCracken and Ernie Taft. In this issue we will document the work of John Lundvall and Marcia Crooks.*

**John Lundvall** was born in Bellingham in the house that was located on the south-east corner of Route 140 and South Maple Street, known as the Four Corners. The house became Hebert's Restaurant and then the Colonial Restaurant. It is the current location of the Charles River Bank branch, 2 South Maple Street.

According to our records, Mr. Lundvall was never Chair of the Historical Commission, but his contribution to documenting Bellingham history in his roles as a researcher and long-timed editor of the *Crimpsville Comments* (from 1976 to his death in 1988) cannot be underestimated.

His contribution was so significant that in 1989 when the Bellingham Library moved out of 3 Common Street to 100 Blackstone Street, the Local History Room at the new library was dedicated in his name. For over 3 decades his portrait (which was recently donated by the museum back to his family) overlooked local history researchers at the Bellingham Library.

Looking through our archives, we found evidence of the detailed research that Mr. Lundvall did during his time on the commission. Some of those research projects included:

- Documenting his eyewitness report of the 1912 visit of the Pacific Coast Borax Company's Mule Team to Bellingham (documented in the Winter 2017 issue of the *Crimpsville Comments*: <https://tinyurl.com/5eppek9e>)
- Initiating Bellingham History Day in 1974. Bellingham History Day was a day for Bellingham High School Students to meet for a short lecture about Bellingham History and give them the opportunity to view and touch some local history ephemera, including: a meteorite that had landed in the Bear Hill section of Milford; a map, which Mr. Lundvall indicated was an early version of Bellingham) from 1685 which showed that 1800 acres were purchased from Sagamore John, a Native American; the 1719 petition to found the town (which was nearly named Westham) and so much more.
- According to an article in the November 23, 1974 issue of the *Woonsocket Call*, he assisted the Bellingham Bicentennial Commission with planning and executing programs to celebrate the country's 250th birthday.
- Documented his research on women who served in the American Revolution, specifically Deborah Sampson, whose distant cousin Noah Alden was a pastor in Bellingham. This research is documented in the Early Fall 2008 issue of the *Crimpsville Comments*. <https://tinyurl.com/32st9trj>

- Finding, documenting and donating the Muster Roll of the Bellingham residents who answered the Crown's call to arms in the French and Indian war, between 1754 and 1763.



This photo was published in the 6/20/1974 issue of the *Woonsocket Call* newspaper with the following description: John Lundvall, center, examining historical town artifacts with from right, Debra Leeman, Diane Walcott, Mark Ingalls and Roland Constantineau, eighth graders at Bellingham High School.

According to his obituary, Mr. Lundvall passed away on March 4, 1988 at his home in Mendon. In addition to his work preserving local history throughout the region, he was a Selectmen and School Committee member in Mendon.

He was born in New Sweden, Maine on December 19, 1906 and was employed as a cost accountant. He was also a photographer.

At the time of his death he held the distinction of having the longest continuing membership in the First Baptist Church of Bellingham. He served for 22 years as treasurer, as a member of the Board of Deacons, on the finance committee and advisory committee and served as the church historian.

As previously mentioned, he served as the editor of this publication for 12 years, and was a consultant to the Bellingham Historical Commission throughout that time.

He was also a member of the Bellingham Book Panel Committee that published *The Town of Bellingham 1719-1969*, a publication for the 250th Anniversary of the town.

He was also a charter member of the former Bellingham Historical Society.

## GUARDIANS OF BELLINGHAM'S HERITAGE STORIES OF LOCAL PRESERVATIONISTS

**Marcia Crooks** was a life-long Bellingham resident of a family that has resided in Bellingham since the early 1800s.

Marcia served as Chair of the Bellingham Historical Commission from 2011 until 2020, and according to Town Annual Reports, had been a member of the Commission since 1996.

Marcia's only remaining sibling, Janet Hendrickson (who will be 90 in November), remembers that "Marcia had a photographic memory and often rattled off detailed facts about Bellingham's history as far back as the time of its early settlers, some of which were our ancestors. Bellingham was mainly a farming town through the mid-1970's and we all worked at our dairy farm on Lake Street, which has been in our family since 1787. Marcia worked with my dad, mainly in the hay fields and tending the cows, but she also raised hens and sold their eggs so she could attend what is now Bridgewater State University, where she also earned a Master's degree in Physical Education."



Marcia was no wallflower! According to her niece, Lisa Hendrickson, "she voiced her opinions at public meetings and always supported her statements with information she had researched about the subject and her historical knowledge of the town. She also corrected those who touted incorrect historical facts. Her love for Bellingham was demonstrated by her lengthy, dedicated service to the town as Chair of the Historical Commission. As a fifth generation resident, she used her town history knowledge combined with her teaching experience to increase the Commission's public outreach. She delivered talks about the town's history at the Senior Center and authored many of the historical articles published in the Commission's quarterly publication, the *Crimville Comments*, during her tenure. She worked at sparking the interest of young people in the town's history by including the Boy Scouts in Commission projects that allowed them to obtain their badges and Girl Scouts who participated in and were honored at Commission events. Working with young people stemmed from her years of teaching and coaching them and as Director of Physical Education in the Abington Public Schools."

"In addition, Marcia won many awards throughout her 39-year professional career for her dedication to advancing girl's sports in Massachusetts. She was inducted into the Bridgewater State University Athletics Hall of Fame and the Northeast Women's Sports Organization Hall of Fame (<https://www.newagenda-northeast.org/marcia-a-crooks-massachusetts-1989/>) for her pioneering work petitioning the State, which resulted in establishing the first Girls' Sectional and State Basketball Tournaments. She also directed the initial years of State Sectional Meets for Girl's Track and Field. After retiring, she won numerous Gold and Silver medals in Track and Field events in the USA and Canada Senior Olympics competitions."

- In 2012 Marcia expanded programs to include a once-a-month Open House, a ghost program in collaboration with the Bellingham Library, and the Museum was open on Veterans Day and before the Memorial Day Parade.
- In 2013 Marcia worked with authors Paul H. and James B. Tedesco, editing a section of their book, "Postcard History of Norfolk County, Massachusetts."
- In 2014 and 2015 she gave a series of seven talks to Bellingham seniors - four were held at the Senior Center and one at the Museum.
- In 2019 Marcia facilitated visits to the museum by the 5th graders of the Bellingham Memorial School for a tour and question and answer session.

Under Marcia's leadership in 2011 the museum was officially dedicated and named the Ernest A. Taft Jr. Historical Museum. In that year the museum experienced rain water getting into the basement and due to quick action of Marcia and other Commission members, the contents were moved to a pod, that caused quite a stir at the time because of its "cow" décor. The pod prevented further damage and it was reported that nothing of value was lost.

Marcia, and the Crooks family's, contribution and dedication to preserving the history of the Town of Bellingham will be long remembered.

## CRIMPVILLE COMMENTS

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Check website for current hours  
Also open by appointment

Telephone: 508-966-5838

Email: [history@bellinghamma.org](mailto:history@bellinghamma.org)

[www.bellinghamma.org/460](http://www.bellinghamma.org/460)



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*Home of the  
Ernest A. Taft Jr. Historical Museum*

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we would appreciate your support!

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