

PRUDENCE WRIGHT

AND

**THE WOMEN WHO GUARDED
THE BRIDGE**

PEPPERELL, MASSACHUSETTS
APRIL, 1775





**THE
STORY OF JEWETT'S BRIDGE**

BY

MARY L. P. SHATTUCK

TO THE
PRUDENCE WRIGHT CHAPTER
DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
OF
PEPPERELL, MASSACHUSETTS

TO WHOM THIS PAPER WAS READ BY THE REGENT,
MARY L. P. SHATTUCK, NOVEMBER TWENTY-SIXTH,
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED NINETY-NINE, AND AT WHOSE
REQUEST IT WAS PUBLISHED MAY, 1900.

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OUR forefathers and foremothers met all the most trying experiences of pioneer life. They fought a grim battle, alone in the wilderness, rendering their intense love of freedom into terms of service and sacrifice. Contact with nature in the beauty of a rugged simplicity, rest from the artificial excitement of old world crowds and the established order grown hoary, made it possible for a new depth and strength of character to take root and grow, developing a new nation in the fullness of time.

It is not my purpose to recite the virtues and weaknesses of our Puritan ancestors, but to give a sketch of one little group that lived on these hills so familiar to us, their descendants. Their deeds of courage and self sacrifice are still repeated, but the half remembered details are fast slipping from our grasp since the story-tellers of past generations have ceased to prompt us.

The old gravel yard is also a sealed book to the youth who looks curiously over its walls at crumbling moss-covered stones whose quaint epitaphs tell them little or nothing of the long forgotten dead whose graves they mark.

No one can understand the sentiments and deeds of the Puritans and Loyalists of Colonial and Revolutionary times without some knowledge of their family connections and traditions, social positions, religious beliefs, political affiliations and the blend or antagonisms of opinions frequently resulting from intermarriages of those who came from widely differing social circles in England a short time previous.

They lived in a warfare of opinions and were necessarily intense and intolerant in their struggle for freedom of opinion, if they were Puritan.

"With prejudice strong, they had principles stronger,
They might well be allowed an occasional frown
Who brought Freedom up and the wilderness down,
A solemn demeanor was surely their right
Who had Nature and Satan and Indians to fight,"

There is not a tradition or fact about the early life of these old New England homes that does not have its interest much enriched for us by our knowledge of the social, religious and political conditions that shaped its events.

This slight sketch is an attempt to gather the most reliable traditions and place them with related facts from records of the towns and families involved, in the hope that the effort will give a clearer picture of the people and events to which they refer—a bit of old town life seen in the glowing embers on hearthstones whose fires long since died out.

On October 16, 1673, the town of Dunstable, Massachusetts Bay Colony was incorporated by its General Court.

For more than sixty years this large tract of land, embracing about two hundred square miles, "equal in size to many an European dukedom," was believed to lie in Middlesex County, Massachusetts. Dismemberment began in 1721, the northeast corner of Dunstable becoming a part of Londonderry. Later, parts of Dracut, Groton, Pepperell, Townsend, and towns of Tyngsboro and Dunstable in Massachusetts, the city of Nashua, the towns of Hollis and Hudson, and parts of Brookline, Milford, Amherst, Merrimack, Litchfield, Londonderry and Pelham in New Hampshire, were taken from this grant.

December 28, 1739, Dunstable West Parish, (now Hollis), was incorporated. There are twenty-nine names upon its first tax list. Most of these names are borne by descendants living in the township today.

The boundary line between the provinces of Massachusetts Bay Colony and New Hampshire was a matter

of lively dispute. At length, in 1737, a royal commission met at Hampton Falls to decide the matter. The Royal Governor of Massachusetts and the members of the General Court went down in state. A humorist of the day describes their imposing appearance:

"At the head the lower house trotted two in a row,
Then all the higher house pranced after the low,
Then the Governor's coach galloped on like the wind,
And the last that came foremost were the troopers
behind."

But for all their brave array they did not "fix the right place for the line," so in 1740, the king, in council, decided the matter. When in 1741, the survey was made in accordance with the line determined by the king, the people of Dunstable, West Parish, (Hollis), found themselves to their surprise and grief in New Hampshire, and their parish charter of no value. They had come almost without exception from towns in Massachusetts and their associations were with that colony. They had begun to build a meeting-house. By mutual consent they proceeded with their plans, and called Rev. Daniel Emerson to be their pastor, who signed an agreement to become such March 4, 1743. It was three years before the parish was incorporated as a town by Governor Wentworth, who named it Hollis. Later the people changed the spelling to "Hollis," in honor of Thomas Hollis, a benefactor of Harvard College.

Massachusetts towns were chartered on condition that they would support a "learned and orthodox ministry." The governor of New Hampshire was an ardent supporter of the Established church and had no interest in the religious views of these settlers. He was more interested in enforcing the law that required towns to reserve the best white pine for the use of the royal navy. No doubt Hollis people would have preferred to cut their timber for meeting-houses rather than for his majesty's

ships. After the incorporation of the town, its citizens assumed the support of the church and minister.

The Rev. Daniel Emerson brought his young bride to a log parsonage of two rooms which he built near the site of the present commodious home of the Hollis pastor.

The thriving parish soon outgrew the little meetinghouse and in 1748, a second building was erected on the same site, the spot where the present church stands. It was fifty feet long, forty-four feet wide and twenty-three feet post. It was a rude, comfortless structure, seen through our eyes; it would have been such to them if they had thought about discomforts as we do.

The church was the center of all parish and town life, and was supported by a tax levied upon all the people. The minister was a liberally educated man, and as a rule, settled for life among the people who first called him to be their pastor.

The men who were fitted by education to conduct municipal affairs were selected for public office and were often prominent for several years, filling the offices in church and town or parish.

During the early years, School privileges were not so extensive as later, not from any indifference, but from necessity. Many people among those who were born in these frontier towns could not write. This was particularly true of the women of early colonial days. The favored children in this respect were found in the families of the ministers and of those who kept the town or parish records. They were taught by their parents. The brightest boys of the parish were fitted for college by the minister.

When the Indians were driven away, the clearing made, log houses built, the first rough roads opened, and the meeting-house built, then the pioneers began to provide for schools.

Saw mills followed, and later frame houses came for those who could afford them. Grist mills were few, far

between and very primitive, later than the Revolution. The small boy and a sack of grain were often put on the back of the old horse to go to the mill, ten or fifteen miles away.

Things we regard necessities, if we think about them, were matters of serious consideration. As late as 1780, Ebenezer Farley, of Hollis, was making preparations to raise his barn before haying time. He went to all the blacksmiths in the neighborhood to secure nails,-they were all hand-made then,-and found one pound. That would never do, so he killed a shoat weighing one hundred and forty pounds when dressed, mounted his horse with the carcass before him, and rode to Boston, converting it into hand-made shingle nails. On returning, he said to his sons, "Boys, we can afford but one nail to a shingle, so look where you drive it."

When Dunstable West Parish was occupied with its beginnings, Samuel Cumings was prominent as a leader in its affairs. According to Hayword's History of Hancock, N. H., Isaac Cummings came from England about the year 1630, to Topsfield, in the ship Sarah Ann.

In Bond's History of Watertown, Vol. 1, Isaac Cummins is recorded a proprietor in 1642.

His son John settled in Dunstable in 1684. He married Sarah Howlett, and both died in December of 1700.

Mr. Fox, in his History of Dunstable, records the fact that "Thomas, son of John" born 1659, married Priscilla Warner." Their seventh child was Samuel, born April 2, 1708, in Groton.

In Vol. 1, No. X, of Earliest Church Records in Groton, by Dr. Samuel Green, on page 27, is the following record: "1732-3 January 30th, Samuel Cummins to Prudence Lawrence, both of Groton."

Hollis records give the statement that Mr. and Mrs. Cumins "owned the covenant" in 1733.

Prudence Lawrence Cumings was a direct descendant

of John Lawrence, the emigrant who died in Groton, July 11, 1667.

In the Genealogy of the family of John Lawrence, of Wisset in Suffolk, England, and in Watertown and Groton, Massachusetts, the ancestors of the family are traced through sixteen generations to Robert Lawrence born in 1150 A. D.

In the Records of West Parish, Dunstable, we learn something of their son Samuel Cumings. On the fifty second page of the first volume is this entry:

"At a regular meeting of ye Inhabts of ye West Parish in Dunstable afsembld on ye 13 of March 1743-4 Doct. Samn Comings being chosen Moderator &c." In the same meeting: "Voted and chose Doct. Saml Comings ye 2 Afsesor."

Mr. Cumings never studied medicine, but knowledge of simple remedies and natural skill made his services of value in a time when physicians were not so numerous as they now are. Mr. Cumings' name appears on a petition of the inhabitants of the parish asking the provincial government to grant six garrison houses and twenty-five soldiers for its defense against the Indians. He was moderator of the first town meeting and by the citizens in that meeting was chosen town clerk and one of the board of selectmen.

The next year he presented the petition of the citizens of Hollis to Governor Wentworth, asking for legislation that would compel absent land owners to pay their tax for the support of the minister.

In the One Pine Tree Hill controversy famous in early Hollis history, Esquire Cumings was an able defender of Hollis interests as he also was in the long controversy with the mother town about a bridge where Runnell's

Mill stood in later years. His name frequently appears in the transactions of the church.

These facts will serve to introduce us to the father of Prudence Cumings. We may say that he was a man of social distinction in the community, a leader in municipal and church affairs, filling positions of trust and honor for many years, and representing his town in the Provincial court. He was the first justice of the peace in Hollis receiving his commission from the king. He was town clerk in twenty-two different years between 1746 and 1770, and a sergeant in the French and Indian war. He died January 18, 1772, when sixty-two years of age.

To Samuel Cumings and his wife were born six children-Mary, the oldest, April 22, 1734; Sibbell, November 1, 1736; Prudence, "born at ye Parish of West Dunstable, now Holles, November 26, 1740." She was accordingly born in Middlesex County, Massachusetts, Dunstable West Parish. The establishment of the boundary line between the Province of New Hampshire and Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1741, annulled the parish charter granted by Middlesex County, leaving the settlement in New Hampshire without a charter for five years. By this division of territory, established in 1741, Prudence became an inhabitant of New Hampshire.

Samuel, their next child and first son, was born December 10, 1742. Where these children were baptized we do not know, probably in some private house where religious services were held.

The little meeting-house built in 1743, with "one Glass Window," soon proved too small, so in 1746, the people "Voted unanimously to build a meeting house 50 feet long, 44 feet wide and 23 feet posts in Height." This house had three doors, one on the south side of the building, one in the center of the east side and one opposite on the west. There were two rows of windows, the upper row

being above the galleries. The pulpit faced the south door, the broad aisle run from the south door to the pulpit.

Thomas, the fifth child of Mr. Cumings, was born August 21, 1748. Benjamin, the youngest, born November 25, 1757, was probably baptized in this new meeting-house.

The "Pew Ground," as the space next to the walls was called, had been sold to those who paid the highest taxes, provided they together paid £200 premium for the privilege of building their own pews on this space of honor. The men thus privileged were called "pew men," and their wives could sit with them in their pews.

Mr. Enoch Hunt paid first premium £ 23, and took first choice. Samuel Cumings had thirteenth choice £ 9 10s, and took the space for the first pew at the left of the west door.

The pew before the pulpit was a "Good Hansom Pew" for the minister's family. There were "good Hansom stairs to go to the pulpit," and "Convenient Deacon seats." The space not occupied with pews was filled with benches for the accommodation of those who could not aspire to the dignity of being pew men. The building was unpainted, covered with split clapboards, and neither blinds, porches, steeple nor chimney broke the severe outline of this typical Puritan meeting-house.

All roads led from its doorsteps out over the town. They were little more than bridle paths cut through forests to stump covered clearings, where log houses were still the rule.

Esquire Cumings lived near the meeting-house on the spot which Mrs. Levi Abbott's residence now occupies. This homestead has always been in the possession of descendants of Samuel Cumings.

Some Sunday very soon after November twenty-fifth, Samuel Cuming's youngest son was carried from this home to the meeting-house. The congregation was assembled

in order due and meet, the privileged pew men and their wives no doubt enjoying their distinction, the minister's family in the "Good Hansom Pew," the deacons in small clothes, long stockings, bright buckles, ruffled shirts and becoming gravity, occupied their "Convenient seat."

The Rev. Daniel Emerson stood on the floor in front or the broad aisle to receive Esquire Cumings and the infant son, carried probably by the nurse.

There was neither upholstery nor paint in the audience room, no heat save that in the women's foot stoves, a somewhat frowned upon luxury. There were no flowers except the little human flower in his long white christening robe that swept Esquire Cuming's knees as he held the infant. Let us hope that the pale December sunlight shone through the south windows when Parson Emerson sprinkled the icy cold water on his head and named him Benjamin.

With the other members of the family, Prudence looked on from the family pew by the west door and she no doubt expected a cry from the baby at his cold reception into the church. We will hope he soon found himself in the warm shelter of his mother's arms.

When Prudence was eight or nine years old she could do what was required of a well taught little girl. She could knit socks for her father, sew patchwork for wool quilts of pieces cut from cloth of her mother's dyeing and weaving, she could overhand the seam in a sheet and her sampler was finished.

She had learned the shorter catechism standing at her mother's knee, and afterward she diligently conned the Westminster catechism, hoping to answer without the mistake of a single word when Parson Emerson came to catechize the children, and, a most prized accomplishment, she could write.

When she played, the same traits appeared in her that we see in children the world over, regardless of their

parents' customs. She loved form, color and construction. One bright June day, after she had finished her after noon stint of sewing,-it was stitching the wrist bands for a shirt, in which she had made not a single mistake, two threads back, two forward in each stitch,-and her mother had praised her work after careful inspection and rewarded her with well earned playtime, she went out into the yard, taking with her a much prized sheet of white paper which Esquire Cumings had given to his little daughter for her careful attention to his ink horn. Her mother, as a special favor, loaned her scissors to Prudence. The child folded and cut her paper, squeezed the juices from leaves and flowers and laid on the colors without a brush. This little "love box" was carefully put away among her few treasures and has passed from daughter to daughter for a hundred and fifty years. It is folded much as a little daughter of today would fold a box sitting behind her kindergarten table.

At the time of Benjamin's baptism Prudence was eighteen, and possessed the varied accomplishments of a capable young woman who lived on the frontier in the home of a well-to-do family of influence in the community. She could spin, weave and dye linen and woolen cloths for all household purposes, she knew all the steps from the flax and the fleece to the completed garments. Her knitting needles were always bright-girls in those days knitted a pillow case full of stockings before they were married. She could dip and mould candles, mould bullets and buck shot and pewter spoons. She could handle the flint-lock, net, spear and fishline with skill. She probably never skated, but she knew how to wear snowshoes. She was mistress of a horse, but she never drove, because there were no carriages in Hollis until long after she left town. She knew the processes for preserving meats, making soap and braiding mats and hats.

As an accomplished cook she could make bean porridge,

prepare the boiled dish, cook meats and fish, cook corn meal, rye and wheat, boil cider, make apple jack, prepare the cooking soda which she used from corn cob ashes, boil sap into syrup and sugar. She was accomplished in the art of sand scouring, able to sweep a most graceful pattern in the sand on the living room floor. The ox teams returning from market in Boston brought luxuries for the well-to-do family of Esquire Cumings, Madam would see that her daughter had a chest full of linen as a part of her wedding outfit, quilts and braided mats would not be wanting and I think she told her husband one day when he started for Boston, to bring home a light colored broadcloth for a cloak and silk for a gown. The squire probably added a plume for his daughter's new Dunstable straw, some lace for her neck, and perhaps the first pair of Boston shoes. I am sure the indulgent father-what father will not be indulgent under such circumstances?-remembered Prudence's whispered reminder, made as he started for Boston, to bring her a gay ribbon, long mitts and a fan.

In due time this entry was made on Hollis records: "Prudence Cumings born at the parish of West Dunstable now Hollis Nov. 26, 1740 and married to David Wright of Pepperell Dec. 28, 1761."

On her wedding day she probably mounted the horse behind her husband and rode to her new home in Pepperell. She was twenty-one years of age, David was twenty-six.

David Wright was of the fifth generation in America. John the emigrant was born in England in 1601. He was one of the original settlers and first town officers in Woburn and prominent in town and church affairs until his death.

His son John lived in Chelmsford, married Abigail Warren of Weymouth, his grandson Samuel came to Groton

and married Hannah Lawrence, their second child was David.

There was kinship between David and Prudence through their mothers. I find the following entry on the first page of records of Groton West Parish, now Pepperell:

"Groton West Parish Jan 19 1742 At a Leagal meeting of ye Parish &c. Chose Saml Wright Treasurer"- "Groton West Parish febory ye 16 1742 at a legal meeting of ye Inhabitants &c 4st voted that Saml Wright, Wm Spalding, Richard Warner be a comtee to Provid Preaching till ye last day of April next."

March 15 1742 Chos Samul Wright
Clerk of ye Parish also Treasurer.

At this first meeting in Groton West Parish it was voted to build a meeting-house "forty feet long, thirty feet wide and twenty feet post." It was also voted to dispose of the pew ground to those entitled to buy it, provided they built the "Ministerial Pew."

Sometime passed before the people agreed upon a location for the meeting-house, the choice of the present 1 site of the First Parish church was finally made, the building erected and the "Pew Ground" sold. Samuel Wright had eighth choice and took the space

"at ye west end of ye house south of the west door."

Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Wright were original members of the church in Groton West Parish, Mr. Wright being "dismissed from the chh in Groton to be laid in the Foundation Of the chh in Groton West Parish." Mr. Wright was the first treasurer of Groton West Parish and its clerk for some years. These early records of Pepperell are in

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1. This church stood between the
Bunker
Hill Memorial and old cemetery.

his hand writing. He held the same position in Groton West Parish that Samuel Cumings held in Dunstable West Parish.

When the meeting-house was completed the church called Rev. Joseph Emerson, a son of Rev. Joseph Emerson of Mendon to be the pastor. He was chaplain with Sir William Pepperell at Louisburg in 1745 and died a patriot's death October 29, 1775. One of his brothers was William, pastor in Concord. His brother John was settled in Conway, Franklin County. Their only sister Hannah was married to their cousin, Daniel Emerson, of Hollis. The four men were graduated from Harvard College and lived and died with their first parishes.

Their influence was a very important factor in the preparation of their people for the part which they took in the opening events of the Revolution, and it is not too much to say that they left a lasting impress upon the towns deserving the title by which they were known and are still remembered-"The Patriots' Preachers."

When David Wright brought his young bride to Pepperell, Rev. Joseph Emerson had been pastor of its church eighteen years.

For the next fourteen years Prudence no doubt, gladdened her husband's home, cared for her children, was a leader among the young matrons of the town, listened to Parson Emerson's stirring sermons, visited her kinfolk in Groton and Hollis, and had the satisfaction of seeing her husband begin to follow his father into the public life of the town.

When the first edition of this story was printed, one of the grandchildren of Mr. and Mrs. Wright, Deacon Alvah Wright, of Groton, was living. He remembered his grandparents as very old people, who sometimes visited his father and mother when he was a child, and he remembered that his grandmother had "snapping black eyes," and was of medium size.

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Mrs. Alvah Wright said her great-grandmother, Mrs. Nathaniel Sartell, was a personal friend of Prudence Wright. She also said that her grandmother told her that when she was a girl she often heard the women say that if you want to see some work worth looking at, get Mrs. David Wright to draw out the pattern, and Mrs. Nathaniel Sartell to quilt it, for Mrs. Wright is a fine limner, and Mrs. Sartell "very nice with her needle."

There is a sketch made by Mrs. Wright, in the historical collection in Groton. It is a copy of a picture of Washington taking leave of his mother, which is an evidence of her ability as a "limner." (See frontispiece.)

Somewhere among Prudence Wright's descendants, now living in the West, there is a genealogical tree of the Wright family made and filled out by her. Around this tree she painted in watercolors a border of flowers, angels and fairies.

At this period in church history in New England, it was custom for people seeking admission to its communion to write their "Relation" and submit it to the church officers for action. If it was accepted they were made active members of the church and could have their children baptized. This was a very important privilege, as unbaptized people were deprived of full franchise.

2 One hundred and forty-two years ago this month, Prudence gave her "Relation" to the church in Pepperell, and in due time was accepted into membership. The original document is in the possession of Prudence Wright Chapter, D. A. R., and bears satisfactory evidence of being both the composition and penmanship of Prudence Wright. The reproduction is about one-half the size of the original. Such documents bring into clearer light the religious thought of the times. Prudence was thirty years old, which was the average age when people made "Relations." The next month she presented her children then born-David, Prudence, Cumings, Mary and Wilks,

for baptism. Her husband was not a member of the church at this time.

PRUDENCE WRIGHT'S RELATION.

I have great reason to Bless God that I was Born in a Land of Gospel Light-But I have great reason to be Humbel before God and man, for misimproving such means of Grace as Ive Lived under the Good Education instructiion my Parents and minester and Schoolmasters gave me. But I refusd all and Chose rather Live a Light, Vain, Merry Life till God was Pleasd to bring sickness upon me and brought me Very Low and then I Began to think what would Become of me if I should Die. But as soon as I got well and got into Vain Company these thoughts soon wore off again- But God by his Providence would often be Putting me in mind of Death, Judgment and Eternity but it would soon ware off again- till my late sickness and some trouble, which made me Look in to my Heart to see if way out my sins which Caused God to send the Troubles on me and I find the sins of my Heart and the sins of my Life to be Exceding great so I tho't no one was ever so bad as I was and because they were commited against God I find I canot do any thing of my self with out the Spirrit of God helping of me; which I think that God by his Grace has shone me the Estate I am in by Nature and that their is no salvation but by Jesus Christ and that their is fullness

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But I have great reason to be Humbel before God and man for
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to be Exceding great so I tho't no one was ever so bad as I was and
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that God by his Grace has shone me the Estate I am in by Nature
and that their is no salvation but by Jesus Christ and that their is
fullness

Prudence Wright

eno' in Christ to wash away all my sins if I do except of him as he is offered in the gospel- I take great satisfaction in reading the word of God and Gods worship are delightsome to me and secret Prayer-which was once burdonsome to me- I think I can say that I hate all those Vanites which I yusd to Delight inand that I now Acknowlige Christ to be gest such a Savour as I stand in need off which I hope that God by his goodness has inabled me to except of Christ and this ordnance which for this sum time I have had a great desiar to come to but dare not fear lest Coming unworthly-but God has shown me that it is my Duty to come in obedience to Christs command.

I dare not say my sins are Pardoned but I believe that Christ is the Son of God and that I must be Pardoned by his merits which I desire to rely wholly upon.

I beleve their are two Sacraments bapthisam and the Lord's Super one I recd in my infency to the other I now offer myself. I beg your Axceptence of me and Prayers for me that I may walk acording to the Profession I now make that I may Not be a Scandal to Religion nor a Stumbling Block to others.

Prudence Wright.

AE 30

Novem. 4, 1770.

In 1768, the parish sent William Prescott as "a com. to join with other towns about our threatened privileges," which grew to be the all absorbing interest of the people

until the war cloud broke in April, 1775. At that time David Wright was in the prime of life, forty years old. His wife was thirty-five and they had seven children. In common with public spirited people they were merging all personal interests in one common interest, the public weal. George III, the implacable enemy of the colonists, came to the throne the year before Prudence was married. The stamp act was passed four years later. The New Whigs, the Democrats of their day and the people's party in England, opposed the Old Whigs, the Tories and George III. The king's party wished to make laws and tax the people according to the will of Parliament, which meant the will of the king and the lords. The New Whigs insisted upon a new basis for representation in Parliament. There were also two parties in the colonies. One party was in sympathy with democratic ideas and insisted upon representation for the colonies also as a basis for taxation. Pitt, Burke, Adams and Patrick Henry were quoted at every New England fireside.

The other party in the colonies was composed of those whose sympathies were with royalty, the traditions of the past, the established order. In this class were found the royal governors, the clergy of the Established church, and some of the people who were associated with the representatives of royalty either by ties of kindred, official position or social relations. Others, not a few, were Loyalists, because that for them was patriotism. These Loyalists in the colonies were often called Tories. Some of them supported the king because he was king, while disapproving his methods.

The Loyalists numbered in their ranks many of the most cultivated and influential men of the times, men of unquestioned integrity whose sincerity we can at least appreciate, time having placed us distant from the heat of contest, where we can calmly consider the strife that divided our ancestors.

How easy it is for us to see that the struggle of our ancestors was to secure English liberty. Our fathers took up arms to defend the rights of Englishmen against the tyranny of the king and his adherents. Mr. Pitt told his countrymen in vain, that the American controversy was their cause also. Burke's immortal orations against the war challenged admiration only. His masterly plea for conciliatory measures was made but one month before the battle of Lexington. The Declaration of Independence did not come until a year of fighting had confirmed the most far-seeing in the belief that separation was the step forward which must be taken.

Pepperell was loyal to the democratic tendency of the time. There was not a Tory within its borders, more than could be said of most towns. No doubt the marked personality of her "Patriot Preacher" here shows its influence.

When the matrons of Pepperell heard of the Boston Tea Party, they burned their tea before the meeting-house, so our grandmothers tell us. Probably Mrs. David Wright came down Park Street with her contribution.

"It is in this town that one of the first liberty poles was erected." "Few if any town of its size in the Commonwealth contributed so many men and so much blood in the war of the Revolution as Pepperell."

The opening months of 1775, found all her able-bodied men enrolled, under weekly drill, and ready to respond to the first call.

The women were no less ready, the anxious heart of the wife and mother would fain believe that rights would be secured without the baptism of blood, for they knew what it would mean if fathers and husbands left the homes and farms.

When the time came they met the crisis with a selfforgetfulness that matched the heroism of the men, they moulded the bullets and tied the cartridges around them,

they filled the powder horns and gave the men their Sunday coats which they themselves had spun, wove, cut and made, bade them Godspeed, and faced home duties.

They had no clubs or chapter of Daughters, these first Daughters of the American Revolution, to correspond with men's training companies, but they were actuated by the same unanimity of purpose and devotion to country, and they were not wanting in physical and moral courage. They needed the occasion only, to spring at once to active service minute women.

If the call required united effort, they too, would organize.

Groups of women from Hollis, Pepperell, Groton and neighboring towns were frequently together, for ties of kinship between these towns were much closer then than now. The women rode from town to town, but few of them "took a journey." The men went to Boston with ox-teams carrying the products of the farm, and returning brought supplies and the larger life of the town in touch with the mother-country.

There were afternoon gatherings of women who assembled to assist one another, or help some bride-elect in tying her comfortables and quilting her petticoats and bed covers. While their fingers wrought, they repeated the accounts of the last market day's experience of the men, told about their bleaching and dyeing, cheese making and meat curing, compared notes on butter, soap and candles, criticized some new finery in the square pews on the last Sunday, told over their treatment of children's diseases and how they carried their patients through a fever, admired their hostess' last drawn-in mat, a wedding present for her daughter, approved her doughnuts, and drank her hardhack tea. They expressed their opinion of King George and his Parliament, Lord North and the Tories nearer home, their eyes snapped, their thread snapped in

sympathy until Mistress Sartell warned them to be careful how they quilted.

I can see, too, a typical evening group in the last weeks of that fateful winter of 1775. It is in David Wright's living-room in their little home near Sucker Brook where it crosses Oak Hill road. David's long day's work ended with the chores, and now he sits in his arm chair watching David, Jr., who is cracking nuts, and his little Prudence as the child holds her arm before her face and turns the row of apples roasting on the hearth. His wife is tucking the three younger children into the trundle bed.

This same evening, John Shattuck, whose home was beside the block house on Park Street, looked across the supper table at his wife Lydia, and told her that he must see David Wright about Parson Emerson's wood, as it was high time that the last part of it was hauled. Thirty cords of wood delivered at the parsonage door, half in September, the remainder in mid-winter, was a part of the minister's salary.

Lydia put the ever-ready knitting work into a bag which she hung on her arm, and together they went to neighbor Wright's. When they opened the door, David and his son were peeling brooms. Prudence stood at her spinning wheel and little Prue sat on her stool before the fire with her cat in her lap watching the sputtering apples.

David and his wife put aside their work to welcome the neighbors, the children made their manners and retired to the corner. The men talked about the prospect of three or four weeks of sledding, and the women adjusted their knitting sheaths prepared to knit as they discussed household affairs. Presently Mr. Isaac Boynton dropped in from across the way. Later, Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Blood came down across lots from Oak Hill. Mr. Blood's house stood on the spot where that of his great-great-grandson, Mr. David Blood, now stands.

They are soon interrupted by the arrival of Nehemiah Hobart

and his wife Rachel, on horseback. Nehemiah tells Lydia Shattuck the last news from down country, after they have all shaken hands. Nehemiah and Lydia are cousins, grandchildren of Rev. Gershorn Hobart, of Groton, and great-grandchildren of Rev. Peter Hobart, of Hingham.

Nehemiah is town clerk this year and "one of the leading men in public matters in Pepperell." He is also a member of the committee of correspondence, and naturally the men begin to discuss public affairs. They talk about the last training day and repeat what Colonel Prescott said to them; the women drop their household economy and listen. Mr. Hobart tells the company something of the committee work. Then they all join in rehearsing the points in Parson Emerson's last Thursday afternoon lecture, recalling also, the vigorous statements he has been making of late about the duty of a citizen.

It is a close circle about the blazing hearth, the mug of cider passes from man to man, the women's knitting needles flash in the firelight.

Last to join the company are Nathaniel Parker and his wife Ruth. He is a young man in the prime of life, thirty-four years old.

There is surprise when they appear, for Mr. Parker returned from Boston today and it is not custom to go neighboring on the evening of return from market, but there is reason, for Nathaniel brings a printed sermon that David told him last Sunday he wished to see.

On February twenty-first, the Groton company of "Minute Men," listened to a sermon from Rev. Samuel Webster, of Temple, N. H., preached before them by request of their officers. The Groton company did not wish their pastor to preach their sermon because he leaned too strongly toward royalty to please them. Mr. Webster uttered no uncertain words so the company requested him to permit its publication. On his way out or Boston, Nathaniel Parker drove through Queen Street, now Court Street, and

bought a copy at the printers, which Nathaniel Hobart Offers to read aloud. Mistress Wright places a little stand at his side with two lighted tallow dips upon it. Prue, with housewifely care, brings the snuffer, then hastens to the shelter of her corner for fear that her mother will remind her of bed time. The men listen with attentive faces, the women knit gazing into the fire. Here is a passage that shows the spirit of the preacher: "Lord North says that he will lay America at his feet, which is explained to mean obedience without reserve to the Mother Country, in plainer English to himself and this, compared with the manifest readiness of the new Parliament to second to the utmost of their power the designs of the minister, scarce leaves us even hopes-but from the unsearchable ways of Providence-but that we must e'er long hear the sound of trumpets and the alarm of war. Shall we then be idle, when, under God, we must depend only upon ourselves? Duty to God who commands us not to be servants of men forbids it. Benevolence to manhood who in opposition to the laws of nature and of God are almost divided into the ignoble characters of tyrants and slaves, forbids it! Gratitude to the nation that once taught us how to prize freedom, forbids it! Justice to our Fathers who so dearly purchased the blessing forbids it! Justice to ourselves and unborn millions, forbids it! My friends, I wish you and your country wishes you calmness of judgment and firmness of conduct in this hour."

Highly wrought must have been the feelings of people who listened to such words, knowing them to be prompted by the dangers of the present hour, dangers which might cost these men in this circle their lives if they were true to their convictions.

The women's hands lie idle in their laps, the fingers still closed mechanically over the needles, their gaze divided between the glowing bed of coals on the hearth, and the faces of the men. The men look steadily into the fire.

Young David feels a thrill of suppressed excitement which he does not understand and watches the company. The child, Prudence, forgotten by her mother, lies asleep on the settle with her cat in her arms. For a few minutes after the reader ceases no one speaks, the only sound to break the stillness comes from the cradle as it rocks slowly to and fro, moved by the unconscious action of the mother as she sits with her toe under the rocker. Her baby lies in it, him she has named Liberty, in the ardor of her devotion to country.

Does Nathaniel Parker see battle fields in the glowing coals? In four months he will be lying dead in the trenches on Bunker Hill, and his wife will be standing alone with her five children under fourteen years of age, facing her battle field. There will be seven other Pepperell men dead in those trenches. Jonathan Blood is to go from his door one day and no word will ever return from him to be cherished in his family, for he is to lie in an unknown grave.

The possibilities throw a shadow over these strong Puritan faces, which the ruddy glow on the hearth cannot lighten.

Presently, as if by mutual consent, the men look for their coats, the women wind the yarn on their balls, and thrust in the needles, while all talk of indifferent matters. These reticent New Englanders seldom give expression to their deeper feelings except as their actions testify to the strength of their convictions.

Prudence kisses the flushed face of her boy and puts her sleepy daughter to bed without a word of reproof, her lingering hand pressing the blanket about the child's shoulders.

David carefully covers the embers with ashes, placing the inverted shovel over the top to prevent them from flying into the room if a gust of wind should sweep down the chimney. Then he hangs the great brass kettle on the

crane and fills it with water-five pails full-Prudence will scour yarn tomorrow. She has drawn in a warp and will weave a web next week.

The long, low room is very silent now; Prue's cat creeps cautiously out of her hiding place behind the dresser and sits on the warm hearth, blinking at a glowing brand that was not covered; a star just over the chimney lies reflected in the kettle of water; the clock in the corner slowly strikes eleven.

In March and April the war cloud grew darker until men and women started whenever they saw a horseman riding rapidly and listened involuntarily when they heard a rifle shot.

The Loyalists were under watchful eyes, one rendezvous in this region was known to be Tory Tavern in Townsend Harbor, and there were Tories in Hollis. Poor Prudence, it must have been a sore trial for her to know that two of her brothers, Thomas and Samuel, were Tories. Capt. Leonard Whiting and his brother Benjamin, the first sheriff of Hillsborough County, were Tories, and Samuel Cutts Shannon, a lawyer recently come to town from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, was of the same political party.

The "Alarm List" of Hollis contained the names of all able-bodied men, and it is thought that the order in which the names were written indicates social position in the town at that time. The names of Thomas and Samuel Cumings and Leonard and Benjamin Whiting are the first four names on the list. The pedigree and surroundings of the Whitings throw considerable light on their party affiliations. Rev. Samuel Whiting, the emigrant, was born in the city of Boston, Lincolnshire, England, where the family was living prior to the year 1333. His family was connected by marriage and consanguinity with several most ancient families. He was graduated from Cambridge University the year that the Pilgrims landed in America, 1620.

Boston was conspicuous among English towns for the independence of its citizens, the protest against tyranny of the church was waxing earnest. At this time, Rev. Samuel Whiting, rector of the church in Lynn Regis, was a non-conformist at heart, and his preaching soon called out censure from his bishop. The Earl of Lincoln was Mr. Whiting's friend and interceded for him. Mr. Whiting resigned, was permitted to leave his parish, and soon after became rector of the church in Skirbeck, near Boston, where his brother was mayor, and his friend and relative, John Cotton, was rector of its parish church. While in Skirbeck he married his second wife, Elizabeth St. John.

Her pedigree is traced to William the Norman in two lines, and in her were united the lineage of ten sovereigns of Europe. The descent in England and America embraces twenty-eight generations. Oliver St. John, her brother, was Lord Chief Justice of England, under Cromwell. She had no sisters. Her mother was Sarah Bulkley, aunt of Rev. Peter Bulkley, of Concord, Massachusetts. "The Bulkley family," says Shattuck in his History of Concord, "was of honorable and noble descent from Robert Bulkley, one of the English barons in the reign of King John in the year 1216." Mrs. Elizabeth St. John Whiting was remarkable for her beauty, her dignity and her commanding presence. She received an education which in those days was rare among women.

While one branch of her family sided with the Royalists in England, her father was opposed to the royal cause. It is easy to see what discussions of royal prerogative and religious freedom must have been held in her home and must have entered as a prominent factor into the training of this noble lady. When she gave her hand in marriage to the staunch non-conformist clergyman it was to face unknown trials.

Rev. John Cotton was obliged to fly, and the Rev. John Whiting had no choice but to follow him if he remained in

the ministry and expressed his convictions, and his brave, unselfish, high-principled wife encouraged him in his determination to do so.

Mr. Whiting refused to retain any part of his landed estate from which he could have reserved an annual income, severed all connections with a home endeared by hundreds of years of priceless associations, came to America, and soon after was settled over the first church in Lynn, the church being organized at the same time.

Mr. Turner, one of his parishioners, makes the following entry in his journal: "Ye town was called Lin in compliment to Mr Whiting who came here from Lin in old Norfolk. Before, wee were called Saugust wch wee did not mch like, some nick-naming us Sawdust. Most thought that ye name was a good one tho some would have it yt it was too short. But to such wee said then spell it Lynne ye change was made some fortie yeare and more agone (1637) and none now find fault."

Leonard and Benjamin Whiting were grandsons of Rev. John Whiting. Another Whiting in that generation was settled over the church in Concord. He married a daughter of Rev. John Cotton, of Hampton Falls, N. H., great-great-granddaughter of Rev. John Cotton, of Boston, England. These connections brought the family into touch with Governor Wentworth.

Previous to his settlement in Hollis, New Hampshire, Leonard Whiting was for a time proprietor of the inn in Littleton and owned an extensive estate there. He was a member of the town committee to frame resolutions concerning the non-importation of British goods, which were published in the Boston Gazette of March 12, 1770. Capt. Leonard Whiting received his commission during his service in the French and Indian war. He was at Crown Point and was present at the surrender of Quebec as captain of the Westford company. When the Revolution broke out he was an officer in the British army.

He probably met Annie Hall, the daughter of the Westford minister, while he was in that town before the French and Indian war. They were married April 23, 1761.

Rev. Willard Hall was also a Loyalist. He was born in Medford, March 11, 1703. He was the son of Stephen and Grace (Willis) Hall, and belonged to a family of distinction. He was graduated from Harvard College in the class with Richard Saltonstall and William Ellery. He married Abigail Cotton, of Portsmouth, N. H., in 1729. Mrs. Hall was probably descended from William Cotton, of Portsmouth, who came to America previous to 1657. Mr. Hall was called to the Westford church in 1727. From the beginning of the trouble with England, his troubles with his parish began.

On the Westford Town Records are these entries: "1774 July 14. Voted to be a day of fasting in this town and furthermore if Mr. Hall Decline the same, then to employ some suitable person to carryon the Solemnities of sd Day."

"Jan. 23, 1775. Pay to Mr. Jonathan Keep the sum of 1£-15-6-3 for what he paid Mr. Emerson for preaching our fast last summer."

"May 25. Voted that Rev. Willard Hall should give up his arms to the committee of Correspondence of this town."

In July, 1777, Mr. Hall's conduct was voted dangerous to the state by a large majority.

There were three Tories in Westford when the war broke out, two of them speedily repented. Mr. Hall remained a Loyalist to the close of his life, in 1779.

Benjamin Whiting married another daughter of Rev. William Hall, Grace Hall. They were married in Portsmouth, N. H., in 1770, by the Rev. Dr. Haven, of the Established church. It is easy to see what influences of heredity and surroundings made the Whitings slow to break with the established order.

Richard Cutts Shannon came from Portsmouth, probably

from the same social circle. He lived on "The Plains" in what is now Brookline, not far from the present school house there. Thomas and Samuel Cumings were probably influenced by their associations with Loyalists, which may also have deepened personal convictions. By whatever motives actuated, Loyalists were daily growing more conspicuous, and their social position more unpleasant in the glow of devotion to the colonial cause that surrounded them.

The gravity of the situation was the all absorbing thought on the training ground, in the church meetings, by the hearthstone as well as before the committees of safety and of correspondence.

By the first of March, the outlook had grown more gloomy, but then, as always, the grief of a mother's heart bound her thought to her cradle. On the twelfth of the month little Liberty, Prudence Wright's child, died and his body was laid over in the old graveyard beside that of his sister Mary, who had died the previous July. Their graves are marked by a single slate tablet on which their names were cut. After her baby was gone, she went to her Hollis home for a few days. Her father was dead, two of her brothers and her sister Mary were living in their own homes.

Benjamin remained unmarried. He was in full sympathy with his sister Prudence, and was enlisted in Capt. Reuben Dow's company, Col. William Prescott's regiment. In the Hollis "Discriptive Roll," Benjamin is recorded as being light, five feet eleven inches in height and nineteen years of age. He fought in the Battle of Bunker Hill, where he lost his knapsack valued at 1s8d, and his trumpline valued 8d. Later he served in a New York regiment at Trenton and at Princeton, and was promoted to a lieutenantcy.

Spring was early in 1775. By the first of April the

frost was out of the ground in most places, and spring plowing well under way by the middle of the month.

Some snow banks still lay on the north side of stone walls, and there were dingy patches of ice in cold alder swamps. Roads were rapidly becoming firm, a fact to be fully appreciated by the nineteenth of the month. Streaks and patches of greenness on warm land marked the recent disappearance of water. Cowslips had already been served on the table, the first "green things" of the spring.

Children found May flowers in sunny sheltered spots,

"Half vent'rin liverworts in furry coats,
Blood root, whose rolled up leaves ef you oncurl,
Each on 'em's cradle to a baby pearl."

They had gathered "chink plums" on the edge of the forest and made willow whistles. Fruit trees were in full flower when the British came to Concord so a journal of the day tells us.

The women had brewed root beer from buds and roots gathered in their first tramps into the fields. Root beer was their one excuse for such tramps. Crows were cawing in the budding tree tops, and returning song birds, frogs, lambs, calves and the first chickens led proudly out by the hen that "stole her nest," all added a fresh interest to the life of field and farm yard into which the children entered with all their youthful enthusiasm and they work with a will too, many a task must be accomplished before school opens in June.

There was linen on the grass in every "forehanded" woman's door yard, for the very best time to bleach linen is when the fruit trees are in "blow." Men were mending fence, burning brush, and pushing forward the preparations for "planting time." There is a sense of freedom coming in the spring after a long New England winter- who can say how much of this spring life entered into the "minute men," and helped inspire them in the first departure

from home to the larger field on which they were to sow in blood, that coming generations might reap a priceless freedom? Sunrise saw the household at work; evening darkness put an end to the long day's toil, each like its predecessor until there came the day when "minute men" were called to sow in other fields.

Edmund Bancroft rode into town late in the forenoon of April nineteenth, bringing word that the British were coming, and that the towns nearer Boston were arming to meet them. Colonel Prescott mounted his horse at once, and leaving orders to have the Pepperell and Hollis men meet him in Groton rode away. The word flew over the hills, household cares, fields and flocks were forgotten.

"From many a peaceful haunt they come;
From homely task and rustic care,
Marshaled by faith, upheld by prayer."

They said good-bye and were gone.

The report of the fight on Lexington Green and at Concord came to town later. The women knew that their townsmen had helped chase the British and were now with other "minute men" near Boston, and that more serious action was imminent. Spies were reported as passing between the British in Canada and those in Boston. One direct road from Canada to Boston ran through Pepperell. For the women there was all the anxiety and dread uncertainty with none of the excitement of the assembled forces nearer Boston, but when they knew there was a possibility of doing something they seized the opportunity, and in the spirit that animated the "minute men," acted at once.

Word was sent from house to house in Pepperell, for the women to assemble. We know that some from Groton also responded. Hollis women may have been represented in the gathering. They determined that no foe to the cause so dear to them should pass through town, if they could prevent it. They elected Mrs. David Wright

as commander of their company. She chose Mrs. Job Shattuck, of Groton, as her lieutenant. This company has always been known as "Mrs. David Wright's Guard." Mrs. Job Shattuck's husband was in the engagement at Lexington and Concord and in active service until the close of the war. His name has passed into the annals of history as one of the greatest sufferers in Shay's Rebellion.

Mrs. Job Shattuck was Sarah Hartwell. Miss Edna Hall Tarbell qualified as a D. A. R. from these two ancestors, Mr. and Mrs. Shattuck, and Roxanna Wright Longley 3 from Prudence Wright. Both are members of Prudence Wright Chapter.

In the old grave-yard in Groton, under its pine trees, stands a time-worn slate stone bearing this inscription:

MEMENTO MORI

(Cherub's head)

Here lies ye Body

of Mrs Susanna

Quailes wife of

Mr Charles Quailes

who departed this

Life Augt 25th 1775

Aged 25 years 9 moS & 25 days

Mrs. Susanna Quailes was one of the
"Guard."

Dr. Samuel Green, in "Groton Historical Series," Vol. 1, No.5, tells us that Charles Quailes was the Groton baker in 1775. The bakery was at the corner of Main Street and Fagot Lane, and the sign announced:

"Ginger bread, Cake and Bisket sold here."

There has never been wanting a Groton bakery on Fagot Lane since Samuel Quailes crowded fagots under his ovens.

Elizabeth Hobart, daughter of Nehemiah Hobart and

Rachel, his wife, was seventeen years old when the women 4 were called to meet at Jewett's bridge. Her mother could not go so she sent her daughter. Elizabeth afterward became Elizabeth Hobart Heald.

Mrs. Jonathan Shattuck, who was one of the women to burn the tea before the church door, was another member of the Prudence Wright Guard. A great-aunt of Capt. Phineas Adams was another.

Unfortunately, the muster roll of the "Guard," if one was made, was not preserved. Tradition enrolls the women of this immediate neighborhood, between thirty and forty in number. We know that their uniform was their absent husbands' and brothers' clothing, and their accoutrements were the muskets left by the men-pitchforks and anything that could be made to do service. Their rendezvous was Jewett's bridge over the Nashua river, in Pepperell, the place where a person coming from the north would be obliged to cross, unless he forded the river.

The "Guard" assembled at dark one night a few days after the nineteenth of April, when they heard the rumor that British messengers were expected to cross the town. There were pine trees on one side of the river near the bridge, but no houses very near. The bridge at that time was an open one. The road, then as now, curved around high land on the north side so that the bridge was not visible until it was nearly reached by a person coming from the north. How long the women waited there was not remembered by our grandmothers in their story, but they were excited, so the story runs, as told by a descendant of Leonard Whiting, for when two horsemen approached from the north they heard the women's voices before they came in sight, and the captain's voice above the others. One of the horsemen recognized it as that of his sister, whose fearless, determined spirit he knew full well.

4. This bridge was repaired and rebuilt several times, but was torn down in 1962 and replaced with a new covered bridge in 1963.

"Not one further step I ride!
One who rode with Whiting cried
'Tis my sister Prue! Alas,
She would never let me pass
Save when her dead body fell!
I turn back from Pepperell." *

and from that hour her brother Thomas was never seen by his family or townsmen, so this tradition runs. Capt. Whiting being a military man, was not so much impressed by the voices of the women, and rode on into the midst of the "Guard" before he realized the nature of the force he had to face. The women surrounded him, seized his horse, and at the command of "Capt. Wright," compelled him to dismount and submit to search. In his boots were found treasonable papers.

The women marched their prisoner to the middle of the town, probably up Main street to the tavern kept by one Solomon Rogers. They were entertained-a substantial supper no doubt-and guarded their prisoner until morning, when they marched him to Groton and delivered him into custody. The papers were sent to the committee of safety at Charlestown.

Here is a slightly different version of the story as told by a descendant of David and Prudence:

Soon after her son Liberty died, Prudence went to her Hollis home, and one afternoon heard her brother Samuel, and Leonard Whiting make plans to meet a force of English and lead them to Groton. She succeeded in leaving Hollis without exciting their suspicion and returned to Pepperell, where she called together the women, who dressed in their absent husband's clothing and proceeded to the bridge near Jewett's fordway, prepared to defend it in the absence of their husbands and brothers.

*From a poem written by Annie V. Cuthbertson and published in "Turner's Public Spirit" of January 15, 1898, Ayer, Mass.

Soon after nightfall, horses were heard approaching, but instead of the force of British expected, only two horse men approached. Prudence, as chosen leader, ordered a halt. They turned to fly, but the women seized their horses. Leonard Whiting drew his revolver and was about to use it when Samuel Cumings made him lower it, saying: "I recognize Prude's voice and she would wade through blood for the rebel cause." The men were dismounted and searched, and despatches from the British forces in the field, to the British General in Boston were found upon them. The prisoners were taken to Groton to the committee of safety, and the next day were given their liberty on condition that they would leave the colony. They departed in the direction of New York. Samuel Cumings never returned. Samuel was the favorite brother of Prudence, and his loss was a life-long grief to her.

At the time when Leonard Whiting was delivered into the custody of Dr. Oliver Prescott, a member of the committee of safety in Groton, his daughter Annie was twelve years old, and the doctor's son Oliver, of the same age. Some years later she became the wife of Dr. Oliver Prescott, Jr., who built for his bride the Jacobs house in Groton, where they lived until they removed to Newburyport.

Sabine, in his *Loyalists of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, page 422, gives the arrest of one man, Leonard Whiting, at Jewett's bridge, where the women, under the command of Mrs. David Wright, were assembled, determined that no foe should pass it. He also states that rumors were rife that the regulars were coming.

In the Town Warrant of Pepperell for March 11, 1777, the third article reads as follows: "To hear the request of Leonard Whiting's guard (so called) and act anything in reference thereto as shall then be thot proper."

In the town meeting called by this warrant, the following action was taken: "Voted that Leonard Whiting's

guard (so called) be paid seven pounds seventeen shillings and six pence by an Order on the Treasurer."

Our grandparents tell us that Solomon Rogers entertained the Guard at town expense, in all probability this money paid the bill. This action of the town is its endorsement of the Guard and shows the estimate placed upon this service rendered to the colonial government. Only one other article was ever entered in a town warrant of Pepperell by women for action exclusively their own. March 11, 1898, the Prudence Wright Chapter, D. A. R., asked permission to erect a flag pole on the common, which request was granted.

After delivering their prisoner into custody the Guard disbanded.

"The women over field and farm
Kept faithful watch and ward;
Shielded the town from ev'ry harm,
Nor thought their duty hard.
They guarded bridge and forest wood.
These women fair and slight;
And for the right they ever stood.
At morning, noon and night.
The story of their gallant feat
Flew swift o'er hill and dell;
And "Reg'lars" then, cared not to meet
Prudence of Pepperell.
Their country's honor, in an hour
Most serious and grave,
Was thus upheld with grace and power.
By women true and brave.
And on the scroll where heroes' names
Appear in shining light.
With names our country proudly claims.
Gleams that of Prudence Wright." *

*From a poem written by Susan H. Wixon, of Fall River, and published in the "American Monthly Magazine," Nov., 1899.

The men returned to their homes to repeat the words of Capt. Parker on Lexington Green: "Don't fire unless you are fired on; but if they want war, let it begin here," and the women told how they kept the bridge. Then the men and women planned for work at home, after which the men returned to camp, and those too old to shoulder muskets counseled the boys and put the remnant of their own strength into the care of their sons' families. Boys suddenly aged by new responsibilities stepped into the furrow and swung the scythe, women added to their cares those of their fathers, brothers and husbands.

Bleaching and dyeing, sheep shearing and planting, hoeing and haying went on some way, until the seventeenth of June came, when the keeping of the bridge was overshadowed by the defence of the breastworks on Bunker Hill.

Where Capt. Leonard Whiting was immediately after his arrest, does not appear on the records, but in March, 1776, the four men-Leonard and Benjamin Whiting, Thomas and Samuel Cumings-were summoned to appear before the committee of safety of the towns of Hollis, Dunstable, Merrimack and Litchfield. On their petition the case was transferred to the General Court then sitting in Exeter.

Capt. Reuben Dow appeared and filed the complaint. The accused appeared by their counsel. The complaint was not sustained and they were discharged. Events, however, soon proved the charges to have been well grounded. In June, Thomas Cumings was indicted before the Supreme Court, and gave bail for his appearance in September. In the meantime he left his family, a wife and three children under five years of age, and his country, and never returned.

Soon after, Samuel Cumings and Benjamin Whiting left their families and the state, and remained absentees.

All three died in exile. The estates of Samuel Cumings and Benjamin Whiting were confiscated.

Grace (Hall) Whiting, the deserted wife of Benjamin, was married to Burpee Ames, of Hollis, May 28, 1782. She brought to him four children under eleven years of age. By him she had one child, Burpee, Jr., and died soon after. Mr. Ames then married Widow Hannah (Pool) Cumings, who brought with her Thomas Cumings' three children under ten years of age. By Hannah, he had eight children. Sixteen children grew up in his family, children of two mothers, three fathers and four marriages.

Leonard Whiting and Richard Cutts Shannan did not antagonize their fellow townsmen to so great a degree. Richard Shannon put his property out of his hands to avoid confiscation. He was in Amherst jail in 1777, but in 1778, Hollis people sent him as a representative to General Court. Leonard Whiting was also in jail at Amherst on charge of "being inimical to the Rights and Liberties of the United Colonies." He took no active part in the war after the Declaration of Independence. His treason to the colonial cause, it appears, consisted in a soldier's loyalty to the government whose commissioned officer he was. He went to Cavendish, Vermont, where he spent the remainder of his life a respected and influential citizen. He was one of the founders of the New Ipswich Academy; also, a founder and trustee of Philips Academy, Exeter.

David Wright and Prudence, his wife, had eleven children. David, the oldest, was in the Revolutionary army near the close of the war. He married a woman from Dunstable, lived an Townsend Hill, and was buried in Brookline, N. H. Prudence lived unmarried and died when eighty-five, in Pepperell. Cumings went to Thompsan, Conn. Mary and Liberty 1st died in childhood. Devera married Nathan Cory, of Brookline. Liberty 2nd married Betsey Blanchard, and died in Nashua, N. H. Artemus married Prudence Cary, of Brookline, lived in Groton,

and died in Milford, N. H. Daniel went to Norfolk, Va., and died at sea. Wilkes went to Newbury and followed the sea. Carolina Matilda married Samuel Hartwell. Her descendants lived in Ohio, Wisconsin and Massachusetts. The wide scattering of the family reminds one of the familiar lines of the old song:

"They grew in beauty side by side
They filled one home with glee
Their graves are scattered far and wide
By mount and stream and sea."

In the records of the church in Pepperell, the following entry appears: On Dec. 11, 1788, "Chose Brother Ephm Lawrence our Revd Pastor & Dn Fisk as a Committee to wait up on Sister Prudence Wife of David Wright upon her with drawal from our Communion." It would appear that Prudence entertained opinions somewhat at variance with the Established Orthodox belief, and that when Brother Ephm Lawrence tried to show her the errors of her ways they had a lively discussion, but an outward submission was for the time secured, and Prudence promised before the church to conform her opinions to the decision of a committee of the brethren.

Five years later, December 17, 1793, this entry appears: "At a chh meeting regularly called to attend to the case of Sister Prudence Wright ye chh after addressing the Throne of Grace for light and direction in the business before them & deliberately considering the subject, came to the following Resolution Viz.

Whereas Sister Prudence, the Wife of David Wright, did promise and agree before this chh some time ago to submit all matters of dispute of an ecclesiastical nature subsisting between her and Brother Ephm Lawrence, to the hearing & Decision of five of their Brethren, but has since refused to comply with their Results & absented herself from our Communion contrary, as we judge, not

only to the letter of her agreement, but also to the Spirit of the Gospel.

Voted, that, if the sd Prudence do not comply with sd Results or in some other way settle her difficulty with Brother Lawrence, previous to our next Sacramental Lecture, she be suspended from the special privileges of ye chh till she makes Christian satisfaction for her neglect."

Evidently the "Results" were in harmony with Brother Ephm position. Whether Sister Prudence, under threat of discipline saw matters ecclesiastical from their point of view, does not appear on the records, but it is open to doubt. Not long after this time the powers and government of the church became a vital question.

The controversy about infant baptism had begun, and the Baptists, although under the ban, had considerable influence. Prudence's youngest child, Daniel, born in 1783, was not baptized. Possibly a part of the ecclesiastical dispute between Sister Prudence and Brother Ephm Lawrence concerned the ordinance of baptism. The incident shows her fearless, independent spirit.

At the close of the war, David Wright changed his place of residence frequently, living in neighboring towns. He appears to have combined the occupations of cord wainer (shoe maker), and real estate agent. His grandson, John Hartwell, said he was a surveyor and laid out New Hampshire towns, naming Jaffrey, N. H., as one of them. From various deeds and tax lists, the following facts appear:

In 1781-2, he was a non-resident tax-payer of Hollis. In 1783-4, he was a resident tax-payer in Hollis. In 1785, both he and his son David were tax-payers in Hollis. In 1791, three hundred and fifteen acres of land in Dunstable were conveyed to David Wright, of Pepperell. Judge Parker, of Nashua, a great-grandson of David, has deeds in his possession showing two thousand two hundred acres of land in Brookline, N. H., held by David

Wright. These were proprietor's grants from Dunstable for the most part.

At one time, previous to the opening of the war, Prudence and David lived on the road to Oak Hill, going from Hovey's corner, near Sucker Brook. Poplar trees mark the site, the house was removed years ago. Some of the closing years of their lives they spent in Groton in the home of Samuel Hartwell, who married Carolina Matilda. According to church records they spent their last days in Pepperell. This entry appears in the records:

"1819 May 22 David Wright ae 93 yrs. 9m. 1823 Dec 2
Widow Prudence Wright-old age 84"

Some thirty years ago, Mrs. Sarah E. Pevear, of Lynn, a granddaughter of Prudence, erected a granite tablet near Jewett's bridge, bearing the following inscription:

NEAR THIS SPOT A PARTY OF
PATRIOTIC WOMEN UNDER THE
LEADERSHIP OF MRS. DAVID WRIGHT
OF PEPPERELL, IN APRIL 1775,
CAPTURED LEONARD WHITING, A
TORY WHO WAS CARRYING
TREASONABLE DESPATCHES TO THE
ENEMY AT BOSTON. HE WAS TAKEN
A PRISONER TO GROTON AND THE
DESPATCHES WERE SENT TO THE
COMMITTEE OF SAFETY AT
CAMBRIDGE.

The Prudence Wright Chapter has placed a tablet beside that marking the graves of Mary and Liberty Wright, bearing this inscription:

In Memory of
The Captain of the Bridge Guard
April 1775
Prudence Cumings
Wife of
David Wright
Born November 26 1740
Died December 2 1823
Erected by
Prudence Wright chapter
D. A. R.
1908

In the conflicting rumors rife in April, 1775, the people of the town were expecting a company of men to pass through it to join the enemy, or possibly messengers with despatches. It is difficult for us to appreciate the confusion, uncertainty and excitement that would result, from their dependence upon chance reports of horsemen who gathered their information as they rode.

It was this uncertainty that led the women to disguise themselves as men, hoping, no doubt, if it became necessary to accomplish their purpose under cover of darkness and by the sudden sally of an apparently large and wholly unexpected body of militia, to put regulars to flight before they discovered their mistake. The duty of that night was to capture despatches and they did it.

It is to honor the courage of these Women, their husbands and brothers far away, their children asleep at home, they alone on the bridge in the silence and darkness awaiting they knew not what, that the Pepperell



Chapter bears the name of their brave leader, Prudence Wright. As the men had done a few days before,

"They went where duty seemed to call;
They scarcely asked the reason why,
They only knew they could but die,
And death was not the worst of all"



Prudence Wright's Lantern