

Massachusetts Boundary Dispute

Tewksbury's north boundary was and still is the northwestern border of town. The Massachusetts border is 3-5 miles north of the Merrimack River. This made Dracut's border between the other side of the Merrimack River and that northern line of 3-5 miles north of the Merrimack River. But when our forefathers drew the original map for the King's Grant. The cartographers did not know the Merrimack River took a dog-leg right where the Merrimack River is in Lowell. This caused tremendous debate and argument over the legal boundary that was part of the King's Grant drawn over 400 years ago. The King's Grant assumed the Merrimack River went straight in a westerly direction. But the Merrimack River went through Nashua and Manchester making the debate confusing about whether the area west of the Merrimack River, from Lowell to Nashua through Manchester and ending at the headwaters of the Merrimack River, belonged to Massachusetts or New Hampshire? The Massachusetts boundary was eventually changed to running straight west. This line started at Dunstable Massachusetts to western Massachusetts ending at Williamstown ending the NH/MA dispute.

John Stark & Roger's Rangers, aka Yankee Doodles

In this Merrimack Valley, Methuen Massachusetts, a man named Robert Rogers was born. Methuen on the northern edge of the Merrimack River and the New Hampshire border. Rodgers lived in the northern woods, hunting and fishing and living quietly in those woods. Furs of deer, beaver, and fox was his business and these woodsmen were very good at blending in with coonskin hats and deerskin clothing. They carried small hatchets, and a supply of bread and salt pork to eat. They used snowshoes in winter and could shoot a musket with uncanny accuracy. They could track an animal or human and were adept at capturing not only animals but also humans in the French and Indian Wars. They knew how to read the sun for the time and sleep on tree branch bows at night. No fires meant no detection so they simply lived in the woods. This type of man knew the Indians and

their ways and learned from them. Governor William Shirley was suddenly put in charge of the British Army and American Militia at the beginning (1754) of the war. Gov. Shirley was not a militia man but with British General William Braddock's sudden death by the Native Americans in Virginia, Shirley found himself in charge until the King of England appointed a new British leader for the Colonies. That would take 4-6 months before the replacement came to the Colonies.

Shirley needed men to scout and fight in the woods. A war that was breaking out here with Britain's arch enemy, the French so the Massachusetts Militia formed a Company called "Rogers Rangers" to help the British Governor of Acadia. Gov. Lawrence wanted to ethnically cleanse the French Neutrals who were Catholics from that Colony. The two English Governors feared the Acadians would help the other Catholic colonies along the St. Lawrence River.

Roger's Rangers were outdoors men from the Massachusetts & New Hampshire area that formed the border between the two states. Littleton's Charles Bulkeley, 1st Lieutenant, was in Acadia and later he was promoted to Captain. They were involved in the ethnic cleansing of Acadia in 1754. They gathered the Acadian men on a rue to come to a meeting about their land. The British surrounded the meeting with drawn bayonets and marched the men to boats bound for the colonies to the South. Then the Militias rounded up other family members and sent them off to the colonies for the remainder of the French and Indian War. Massachusetts would receive the most number of these French Neutrals because Shirley was our Governor. Tewksbury was assigned a family like all other towns.

With the British paying our Militiamen in the French and Indian wars, employment was robust for the fight. Lawrence and Shirley agreed that the French Neutrals needed to be removed. The English had become a British Territory but they were only 10% of the Acadia colony with the French Neutrals making up the other 90%. One company of Roger's Rangers quickly became 6 companies and the Robert Rogers was appointed as Major and Charles Bulkeley was appointed a Captain. The Acadians were moved by force by the British and the Rangers and they were shipped to Massachusetts and other Colonies

to live in custody of the various towns. Tewksbury and all the towns took in these farmers from Acadia during the war. John Stark was appointed a Captain of another Ranger's Company. Stark was a woodsman in New Hampshire and he was captured by Indians in Coos County, New Hampshire, opps, I mean Massachusetts, or so we argued at the time. He lived with an Indian tribe for two years until he and his fellow hunter could escaped and return to Dunbarton, NH.

Stark went on to become an icon in New Hampshire history. He also helped save Tewksbury and Billerica Militiamen during their retreat at the Battle of Bunker Hill in Charlestown, MA. He was also a hero in leading his NH militiamen through Trenton, NJ. in giving the Washington his first victory over the Hessians/British. Stark, a Revolutionary War hero went on to be the Commander of the Northern Army. He was involved in capturing 7,000 British soldiers at Saratoga in 1777 that effectively ended the British's actions in the northern states.

These Rangers were so successful in scouting and fighting the British wanted to copy their techniques. The British and the Americans were very successful together and a British Surgeon wrote a few lines of a verse using an old English tune to poke fun at the strangely dressed Rangers. The nickname for the backwoods fighters and scouts was "Yankee Doodles". Yankee came from the Native American word "Yingling" and it was the Natives word for the white Europeans who came to live here. The British poked fun at our feathers in our hats and our deerskin clothing. The Rangers actually liked it and adopted the song as their own. Many verses have been written to the tune, some say as many as 40 different verses. The feather in the cap signified the different battles and "called them macaroni," slang for the medals the British wore.

Since so many of these Yankee Doodles were from Middlesex County, Billerica and Tewksbury, so we can be proud to be Yankee Doodles. Think about joining a re-enactor and make our Yankee Doodles the proudest patriots in Massachusetts. It is our history and it is the best. If you are interested in being a member of the Tewksbury Minutemen and Militia Company, please contact us at: info@tewksbury-historicalsociety.org. Be proud of our local history. It really is terrific.

Acadians & Marti Gras

Acadians were really excellent farmers who carried the economy up in Acadia. They were not really interested in the French & Indian War. After serving their captivity in Massachusetts (and Tewksbury), the rest of the states, in France, the various other places, half went back to Acadia but found their farms had been sold to pay for their deportation. Scots, English, Irish, and others had re-populated the area so they took off to the woods to start over again. The other half moved to western Louisiana at the Spanish Governors invitation. They settled into Southern farming and were proven to be very industrious. After the Civil War they became known as Cajuns and still have their own Cajun music and language and were responsible for the celebrations on Fat Tuesday, being good Catholics. This annual community event started with community leader going door to door to invite each family to the center of town. The leaders wore feathered masks and rode horses from farm to farm to tell them what to bring to the celebration. People would show up, eating and dancing in costumes until midnight when Ash Wednesday started Lent. This annual event was called Marti Gras.