

REUBEN CUMMINGS, TEEN-AGED DRUMMER BOY

Few people know that only ONE Merrimack resident died in the Revolutionary War. And that person was 16-year-old Reuben Cummings.

Reuben was born on June 15, 1761, 244 years ago here in Merrimack. He was the only son of Joseph and Hannah Cummings. The Cummings family was among the earliest residents of Merrimack. Jonathan Cummings, Reuben's grandfather, shows in 1739 as purchasing land from Christopher Temple, Lot #12 of Brenton's Farm. This lot was located where the ferry was built across the Merrimack River to the 1734 Meetinghouse in what is now Litchfield. Temple and Cummings were those who ran two ferries before the Tory Edward Goldstone Lutwyche at what is now known as Thornton's Ferry. In 1774, Joseph is shown as living in District 5, which was in the area near Lake Naticook, but there were no schoolhouses in Merrimack at that time, so he is not shown as a schoolboy at age 14. In 1774, the New Hampshire Provincial Congress formed Committees of Safety for each town. Simeon Cummings, Reuben's uncle, was one of 7 forming this committee for the town of Merrimack. They enlisted and armed the first "Minute-Men. The first fifteen men were Private William Arbuckle, Pvt. Samuel Barron, Pvt. William Cowen, Pvt. Soloman Danforth, Pvt. Seth Emerson, Pvt. Soloman Hutchinson, Pvt. Thomas McClure, Pvt. Gideon David, Pvt. Abel Haskell, Pvt. John McClure, Pvt. Elezer Usher, Pvt. John Vickery, Cpl. Samuel Ayers, Lt. Benjamin Bowers, Capt. Samuel Ayers, Lt. Benjamin Bowers and DRUMMER REUBEN CUMMINGS. Reuben was 14 years old at the time.

On the "Nineteenth of April in 75" there were eleven Merrimack men who participated in the battle of Lexington and Concord, including Reuben, who garrisoned in Cambridge, Massachusetts under Col. Prescott. After this battle, New Hampshire had more than 2000 men in arms under General John Stark and on June 17, 1775, Merrimack raised 16 pounds to purchase ammunition, and seven of our men engaged the British at what is known as the Battle of Bunker Hill (actually on Breeds Hill). Reuben was among the 7 Merrimack men in this battle.

By December of that year, there were sixteen Companies of rangers formed in New Hampshire, two of which were raised to defend the frontier along the Connecticut River in Vermont. Drummer Reuben Cummings is on muster lists in August and October 1775, and received a coat allowance in Charlestown. He was discharged sometime between December 1775 and July 1776, at the time his father died in March. His father, Joseph, is buried in the Thornton Graveyard. In July, he reenlisted, this time in Capt. William Barron's Company from Merrimack and was in Col Wyman's regiment sent to support General Benedict Arnold in defense of Lake Champlain. They followed what is now Route 101 through Wilton, Dublin and Walpole crossing into Vermont and continuing to Fort #4 and on toward Fort Ticonderoga. Drummer Reuben Cummings now 16 years of age, was in a group building fortifications and foraging for food and supplies. On September 13th, 1776, Lt. Burton's diary reads "13 Sept on this day, Reuben Cummings, drummer, died in the 16th year of his age." He is buried in Vermont, but the exact location is not known. There is a burial site on Mt. Independence, Vermont where many Revolutionary soldiers are buried. More men died of illness than of injuries during this time for lack of good food, clean water and severe conditions.

No other members of the Cummings family appear in the rolls of the Revolutionary War, although Uncle Simeon Cummings served on several Committees of Safety through the war years and are found in many prominent positions in Merrimack's History. The Cummings "House" at the Merrimack Junior High School was named in Reuben's honor. In 1999, the Merrimack Heritage Commission, under Florence

Brown, dedicated a monument to Reuben Cummings at the site of the original meetinghouse at the graveyard near Turkey Hill Bridge.

Much of this history was gathered by Joyce Bishop in researching Volume I of Merrimack's History from Revolutionary War records and diaries. Later credit goes to Florence Brown, who dedicated herself to creating the monument at the Turkey Hill Graveyard. Be on the lookout for Volume II of our history in the near future.

The Merrimack Historical Society is open to the public on Tuesdays from noon to 8 PM and by appointment at 520 Boston Post Road in a one-room Schoolhouse #12.