



CHAPTER III.

Revolutionary War — Arbitrary Measures of the Crown — Agents chosen to meet in Boston — Committees of Correspondence — No more Tea — Energetic Action — Record of Votes on the Resolutions of Congress — Refusal to pay Taxes to the Royal Treasurer — Town Committee of Correspondence — Minute-Men — Preparations for War — Raising Troops — Declaration of Independence — Bounties — State Convention — State Constitution — Procuring Men and Provisions — Soldiers to Hull.

REVOLUTIONARY WAR.¹ — Soon after this time the political affairs of the colonies began to assume an importance that they had never before reached. The arbitrary measures of the English government, continually growing more and more harsh and oppressive, had roused the people to a pitch that boded no friendly issue. Measure after measure was adopted by the ministry, each more urgent and onerous than the former, and forced upon the people until they were compelled to resort to extreme measures in self-defence. During the whole history of the colonies all important business was transacted in open town meeting. Was any measure suggested for the benefit of the town, here it was thoroughly discussed, and adopted or rejected. Was any grievance complained of, here it was also considered and remedies proposed. Here all voters stood upon a perfect equality, where each could and did speak his mind freely and fully, and every vote counted one.

¹ Most of the facts contained in this chapter are taken from the town records, and may be found under the dates to which they are assigned; consequently, special notes will not be needed to verify them.

In these town meetings, therefore, the measures of government came up for consideration, and such means were adopted as seemed best suited to counteract their evil effects.

Here were chosen the representatives to the General Court, to whom were given instructions filled with important and minute detail, and these officers were held to a strict accountability. To their constituents they must answer, and that directly; there could be no evading or shirking, consequently the public business was transacted under a feeling of heavy responsibility, which resulted in carrying out the will of the people as far as the power of the deputies extended. The law-makers in General Court assembled were the same class of men who spoke so boldly in town meeting, and the same spirit animated their actions in the higher position.

Weymouth took an active and prominent part in the primary action that immediately preceded the war of the Revolution, and under the leadership of such men as Major James Humphrey, Dr. Cotton Tufts, and Gen. Solomon Lovell, of the North Parish, and Deacon Nathaniel Bayley, of the South,¹ the town took a position that it had never before nor has since attained. Oct. 16, 1765, Major Humphrey, then representative to the General Court, received full and decided instructions from the town as to the position he was to take in the present position of affairs.²

Sept. 1, 1766, the town refused to consent to the proposition "that the sufferers by the disturbances of last year in Boston should be paid from the public treasury, as recommended by his Majesty, and instructed their representative of this action."

AGENTS CHOSEN TO MEET IN BOSTON. — Sept. 21, 1768, James Humphrey and Cotton Tufts were ap-

¹ See Appendix D.

² See Appendix E.

pointed agents to meet in Faneuil Hall, Boston, on the following day, to consult with the agents of other towns on the present state of affairs.

COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE. — In the mean time the political matters of the State had reached such a point that committees of correspondence had been formed in all of the principal towns, and frequent consultations were held upon the important matters then agitating the country. At a special meeting held in Weymouth, Jan. 3, 1774, of which James Humphrey was moderator, a letter was read from the Boston committee, with copies of the votes and proceedings of that town at meetings held on the 5th and 18th of the previous November, with regard to the cargoes of teas daily expected from the East India Company's warehouses in London, suggesting the co-operation of the several towns in resisting the introduction of this obnoxious article, — obnoxious only because it had been the innocent occasion of an unjust tax. The matter was fully considered and a resolution passed "by a very great majority . . . not to purchase nor use any of the East India Company's teas of any kind (excepting such as they might now have on hand) until the act of Parliament, laying a duty thereon, be repealed."

NO MORE TEA. — Also, that the minds of the people might be more fully determined, and there be no mistake in the business, and to show that they were as ready to act as to resolve, a committee was chosen, consisting of Cotton Tufts, Esq., Major Lovell, Deacon Nathaniel Bayley, Jacob Goold and Ebenezer Colson, to prepare the resolutions in proper form and to present them at the March meeting "to be signed, that the minds of the inhabitants may be generally known."

On the 18th of July, of the same year, a form of cov-

enant was received from the committee of correspondence of Boston, and recommended for signatures. This was placed in the hands of a committee, who were to give it full consideration, obtain as many names to it as possible, and then to deposit it with the town clerk.

ENERGETIC ACTION. — At a meeting held on the 28th of September following, the instructions of the deputies from Boston to the General Court were read, and the same were made the instructions of the town to its deputy, Nathaniel Bayley. At the same meeting, Deacon Bayley was also chosen to attend the meeting of the Provincial Convention to assemble at Concord, on the second Tuesday of October next. The town also accepted the nineteen resolves drawn up by the county committee, agreeing to stand by them, and to hold the constables harmless in refusing to pay over the State taxes to the treasurer appointed by the crown.

RECORD OF VOTES ON THE RESOLUTIONS OF CONGRESS. — The resolutions prepared by the committee had been presented to the inhabitants for signature, according to the action of the town, and were reported as follows. In the South Precinct this preamble was adopted, date Dec. 12, 1774: —

“We, the inhabitants of the Second Precinct in the said Town, under the sacred ties of Virtue, Honor, and love of our Country, do now covenant and agree with each other, that we will conform and strictly adhere to the agreement and association which the American Continental Congress has recommended unto us, and which has now been read.”

This was signed with the following result: One hundred and two in favor, none against, and twenty-one not voting; making a total of one hundred and twenty-three voters.

In the North Precinct the agreement varied a little in its wording, and read as follows:—

“We, the inhabitants of the first precinct of Weymouth, whose names are here underwritten, do signify our approbation to the Continental Association which is recommended by the General Continental Congress held in Philadelphia, in the year 1774, those of us that approve of the same to answer to our names by the word ‘yea,’ and those who disapprove of the same by the word ‘no.’”

The questions were put at the close of the lecture, Dec. 25, 1774, with this result: One hundred and four answered “yea,” four answered “no,” and fourteen did not answer, one hundred and twenty-two voters being at the meeting.

REFUSE TO PAY TAXES TO THE ROYAL TREASURER.—Jan. 30, 1775, Deacon Nathaniel Bayley was elected by the town as its delegate to the proposed Congress to meet at Cambridge, 1st of February next, the town to provide for him. The town also chose a committee to see that the inhabitants adhere strictly to their pledge; and at the same meeting, renewed the vote to hold the constables harmless for not carrying their money for the year 1772 to “Harryson Gray,” and ordered the money to be paid to the town treasurer. On the 13th of March, however, the latter vote was so far reconsidered as to direct the constables to pay the money to Henry Gardner of Stow.

TOWN COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE.—A committee of correspondence for Weymouth, to act with those of the neighboring towns, had been chosen on the 9th of March, consisting of Dr. Tufts, Major Lovell, Major Vining, Capt. Asa White and Mr. Josiah Colson. This committee met in Arnold’s Tavern, at

Weymouth Landing (the building is yet standing), together with those with whom they were to associate, organized by choice of Dr. Tufts as chairman, and Capt. White as secretary, and afterwards did efficient service during the war.¹

MINUTE-MEN. — On the 13th of March it having been deemed necessary, in view of the exigency of the times and the wish to be prepared for any emergency, to enlist a company of minute-men, it was voted to pay them one shilling per week for four weeks; and on May 2d of the same year, it was voted to pay "a pistareen a day for a week to a company of fifteen men for a military guard in the present troublesome times." Deserters were to lose their wages.

PREPARATIONS FOR WAR. — At a town meeting held on the 24th of May, Deacon Nathaniel Bayley was chosen to represent the town in the Provincial Congress to meet at Watertown, May 31; the committee of correspondence was also directed to ascertain who were in need of arms, and report to the commanding officer. Enrolled soldiers from sixteen to sixty years of age were required to meet and organize, those of each parish at their own meeting-house, on the 25th of May. The town also accepted the offer of Mr. Polley for the use of two swivel guns then at Salem, and voted their thanks to Dr. Tufts for his offer to transport them to Weymouth.

On the 29th of May, the committee was authorized to procure arms at the town's expense for those not able to purchase or hire them, and the committee of correspondence was directed to put in order the two swivel guns

¹ See record of Col. Asa White in files of the Weymouth Historical Society.

and to procure ammunition at the town's charge, in case the province should not assume it. The bells were also to be rung to notify an alarm. The thanks of the town were also voted to Hon. Richard Darby for the use of two small carriage guns, which were delivered to Thomas Jenks, to be returned when done, with thanks, and all damage made good.

June 1, 1775, the town instructed the committee to hire guns at one dollar each, for six months; and such was the urgency of the times that the enrolled militia were ordered to appear under arms on the Lord's day, under penalty of one dollar for each day; and those who remained at home, without reasonable excuse, were to forfeit two dollars each. The number of those reporting without arms was twelve in the North Precinct, and twenty-two in the South.

March 11, 1776, a new committee of correspondence was chosen, consisting of Cotton Tufts, Esq., Capt. James White, Col. Solomon Lovell, Nathaniel Bayley, Esq., and Richard Blanchard; and on the 20th of May, two representatives were chosen, Nathaniel Bayley and Col. Solomon Lovell. All persons drawing ammunition from the town were to return the same in amount, or pay at the rate of four shillings per pound for powder, eight pence for bullets, and six pence for flints.

RAISING TROOPS. — At a town meeting held on the 15th of July, the town voted to raise one hundred and thirty pounds by tax, to be added to the bounty offered by the province for the enlistment of ten men, the quota called for from Weymouth, to be raised in ten days. Deacon Nathaniel Bayley and Capt. Samuel Ward were authorized to hire men from out of town in case they should not be raised in town, and to pay them the same bounty as was paid to townsmen, that is, twenty pounds, thirteen from the town and seven from the

province, and the treasurer was to borrow the money for the purpose.

On the 22d of July eight more men were called for from the town, and it was voted to raise one hundred and four pounds additional. These men were enlisted for the Northern or Canada expedition, and fully earned their wages. It was also voted at a meeting held Nov. 18, 1776, to raise ninety-two pounds for the men raised on the previous September. This was to be raised by tax on polls and estates, and all who had been in the continental service for a year were exempt from it. And on the 23d of December following the town raised one hundred and ninety-eight pounds to pay twenty-two men who had gone into the continental service with Lieut. Samuel Kingman, or three pounds additional to each man.

Upon the actual commencement of hostilities, as will be seen, the town took prompt and decided measures to perform its whole duty in carrying into effect its resolutions of the previous years, and to obtain the independence of the country. Men and money were freely raised and sent forward at the call of the continental and provincial authorities.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. — The Declaration of Independence was entered in full upon the town records, and read from both pulpits upon the next Lord's day after its reception. Measures were also taken to prevent a monopoly in articles of necessity, and to guard against extortion, and the prices at which these articles were to be sold were fixed by the town.

BOUNTIES. — At a meeting held Feb. 21, 1777, to encourage enlistments for a longer term than those of previous years, it was voted to pay each soldier enlisting in the continental service for three years, or during

the war, seventy-four pounds additional. On the 17th of March it was voted to pay each soldier who was in the Northern army six pounds for a year. The committee was instructed to inquire "why some of our soldiers came from York before their time was up," and these were not to draw their pay until the committee had made its report.

On the 14th of May it was voted to pay "six pounds per month, for eight months, for men who enlist in the provincial or continental service, and deserters were to forfeit all right to their wages." On the 21st of the same month, a thousand pounds was voted to raise men for the continental army, and a committee of three chosen to hire men from out of town. No one member was to pay more than thirty pounds per man without the consent of another.¹ On the 18th of August the

¹ On the 22d of May, 1777, the town voted the following instructions to Col. Solomon Lovell, its representative in the General Court, from the pen, probably, of Dr. Cotton Tufts. It is, as will be seen, "a remarkably able and well-written document, and will compare favorably with the best public papers of that day."

"INSTRUCTIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TOWN OF WEYMOUTH.

"TO COL. SOLOMON LOVELL.

"SIR. The struggle in which we are engaged is great and important, it calls for the Exertion of all the Powers and Faculties of every Individual in order to secure the invaluable Blessing of Liberty in its full Extent, which we profess to be the grand object of our pursuit. Could these be united and center in the main Point, we might, under Providence, be assured of success; to effect this, as Men have different Powers and Capacities adapted to different purposes, it is necessary that Men be employed in those different Matters for which they are best calculated, and without attending to this, the Publick cannot be well served nor its good Advanced. You are therefore Instructed to use your Influence, that the various offices of Government be filled up by Persons of Integrity and known qualifications for their Particular offices, and that a Multiplicity of offices be devolved upon no one, Especially where they cannot be discharged with Fidelity, and the good of the People, however otherwise qualified or distinguished the Person may be. Agreeable hereunto you are Instructed not to give your Vote for any Person to sit in Council who holds any office or offices incompatable with the faithful Discharge of the

town voted to add four pounds ten shillings per month to the pay of each soldier from the time of marching to his return, allowing twenty miles for a day's march. Three hundred pounds more was also raised for men for the continental service; and on the 25th of August the wages of soldiers were raised to twelve pounds per month until the 1st of November.

On the 22d of September, by vote of the town, men were not to be drafted for the army, and those who

Duties of a Councillor, nor for any Member of the Continental Congress, nor for any holding Commissions under it, and that the Affairs of Government may be conducted, as much as may be, with Dispatch and without interruption. You are instructed to use your Endeavors that Members of the Gen^l Court be not unnecessarily charged with the Transaction of Business that can be as well or better done by suitable persons not belonging to the same, and who may be appointed for such purpose, and that all persons entrusted by the General Court, with Business of any kind, do from Time to Time render an Account of their conduct, where any are unfaithful that they may be displaced without favor or affection, see that the unfaithful be punished, and the upright servants of Government be rewarded, for where faithful servants of Government are not rewarded, no man of Integrity will ever chuse to accept a Trust, and the State must be governed by weak and wicked Men. You are on the one Hand to avoid such parsimony as to discourage worthy men from engaging in the Publick Service, and on the other Hand such a profusion as to encourage Men to fleece the Public, and to wiggle themselves into places of Profit and Honor. You are particularly instructed to use your utmost endeavors that every measure be pursued for the suppression of vice and immorality, and as no People can long enjoy Liberty or Civil Happiness, without a fixed Government, whose Laws are founded in Justice and administered with impartiality, we do agreeably to a recommendation of the late General Assembly instruct you to join with the House of Representatives in one Body with the Council to form a Constitution of government, and when compleated to lay the same before us for our approbation or disapprobation.

“That you Sir, with the Members of the general Assembly, may be directed by the Supreme Governor of the world in the formation of a Constitution satisfactory to the inhabitants of this State and productive of the greatest Virtue and Happiness not only to the present, but to succeeding Generations, that the Children yet unborn may rise up and call you blessed, is the ardent wish of your constituents

“COTTON TUFTS JAMES HUMPHREY ASA WHITE ELIPHAZ WESTON
NATHANIEL BAILEY.”

entered the service in the previous September were to be allowed forty shillings per month to make their pay equal to that of the men hired by the town. Men were becoming scarce, and more difficulty was found in obtaining them, consequently greater inducements must be offered. On the 6th of November, Capts. Samuel Ward and Thomas Nash were instructed to raise men at the best rate they could to guard prisoners, to serve until the 1st of April next, and another levy of eighty pounds was made.

On the 10th of November, under a further call for soldiers, it was voted to "pay them four pounds in case they can't be had for less, and forty shillings for rations, to find themselves in case the State does not find them," and for this purpose seventy-five pounds was voted.

At the meeting held on the 2d of March, 1778, it was found so difficult to raise the necessary number of men demanded of the town that a committee was constituted to devise an easier method of doing it; but notwithstanding their utmost exertions, the trouble met them face to face. Men must be had, and no men were to be found. Committees were appointed to assist the officers in procuring enlistments, but the men came slowly and only upon the offer of superior inducements. The war was lingering on much longer than any had at first supposed, and with no immediate prospect of an end. The buoyancy of spirit and the hope that animated the people at the beginning had died out, and there remained but the stern reality of severe service, small pay, and an abundance of hardship. Enthusiasm could accomplish nothing, for there was none; consequently, money must be given in its stead.

On the 16th of March, 1778, it was voted to raise six hundred and twelve pounds to pay the men under Capt. Ward, at the rate of nine pounds per month, who were guarding the stores near Boston. On the 25th of May

following, fifteen hundred pounds was voted "to raise men to be sent to Gen. Washington, and other places, and the committee was authorized to go out of town to hire them, and to pay each man one hundred pounds, or forty shillings per month, to serve, to be paid in articles at the prices when the war began."

July 8, 1779, the committee was instructed to hire soldiers for the continental army for nine months, three years, or the war, to pay them forty shillings per month in produce at the prices of 1775, or in cash upon the best terms they can make, the treasurer to borrow forty-five hundred pounds for the purpose.

STATE CONVENTION.— On the 22d of July, 1779, Hon. James Humphrey was chosen representative to the State Convention, to meet at Cambridge on the 1st of the following September, for the purpose of forming a constitution; and on the 2d of August the town accepted, by a large majority, the action of the convention at Concord regulating prices, and a committee was chosen to carry the matter into effect, also to see that the regulations were observed. On the 16th of August the treasurer was authorized to borrow nine thousand pounds for the purpose of procuring soldiers. This rapid and large increase of appropriations is simply the measure of the depreciation in the value of the currency of the country at that time, and by no means an indication of such an increase in the actual expense. As an illustration of this advance, or rather depreciation, in 1780, March 13, at the annual meeting, six pounds was fixed as the value of a day's work upon the highways, against two shillings eight pence two years previous. At this meeting the assessors were instructed "to report a list of all persons taxed for estates to be amended by the town, and all upon the list were to be required to give in under oath a true list of their

property, and any who do not shall pay double their assessment, and to double on each assessment until they comply with the requirement."

STATE CONSTITUTION. — On the 24th of April, 1780, a committee was appointed to consider the new Constitution and report, which was done on the 22d of May, and this Constitution was accepted with a proposition of certain amendments, such as "where personal estate is required, it shall be expressly mentioned 'ratable estate'; and that at least as much property shall be required for qualification of members of Congress as for senators, and that no member of the board of war shall be a member of the Senate or House of Representatives; that express provision be made for calling a Congress in 1795." Hon. James Humphrey, the delegate, was instructed to advocate these amendments, and also to vote for the adoption of the Constitution, even although they should not be made.

On the 19th of June the town was divided into twenty districts "as the tax-lists stand, each district to send one man into the service, and if any one refuse to go or to pay his proportion, the captain of the company is directed to draft him. Any widow or female refusing to pay, it shall be added to the next tax, and any district that neglects to furnish its man, the captain of its company shall proceed to draft, the tax-list to be put into the hands of the three highest on the list for the purpose of calling a meeting to carry this vote into effect."

PROCURING MEN AND PROVISIONS.— On the 18th of September the town voted fifteen thousand pounds for three-months' men, and on Oct. 9, twenty thousand pounds more to purchase beef, according to the requirement of the General Court. On Dec. 20, the militia officers were appointed a committee to see

if they can hire nineteen men, the town's quota for the continental army upon the last call of the General Court, and one hundred and thirty thousand pounds was voted to procure beef on the call of the same. Non-residents were to be taxed for their share of expense in hiring the six-months' men, and fifty hard dollars a year for three years was to be the pay of men for the continental service.

At the annual meeting, March 12, 1781, it was voted that "any person refusing to pay his proportion of the expense of procuring men for three-years' service shall be taxed for the same and the tax collected by the officer." On the 26th of March it was voted to change the manner of raising men; voted to raise nineteen hundred hard dollars, or currency, seventy-five for one, for the purpose; ninety pounds in specie to be paid for three-years' men: one third when mustered in, and one third at the beginning of each year for two years succeeding.

The first meeting recorded for the election of State officers was held April 2, 1781. On the 9th it was ordered that the money raised to pay soldiers should be kept by itself; and that a petition be presented to the General Court for the privilege of enlisting the men at the castle for the three-years' service. On June 18, "three hundred dollars, hard money, was voted for three-years' men: one third at the beginning of each year, or fifty dollars bounty, and ten dollars per month." On the 25th of June, men were to be "hired on the best terms that could be made for six months, and if delayed longer than that, to have double wages for the overtime," and for this the town would give security,—a proceeding reflecting somewhat upon its credit.

On the 9th of July it was voted to raise five-months' and three-months' men for the continental service. On July 16 a better prospect opened, when it was under-

stood that "men could be had for fifty hard dollars, and they to relinquish the continental pay." It was accordingly voted to hire them. On the 8th of October it was voted to raise twenty-five hundred hard dollars to hire men for three years, the committee to have discretionary powers in the matter; also voted that the monthly requisition for beef be complied with. Nov. 19, it was voted to assess immediately the State tax to make up the deficiency in continental soldiers; and on Dec. 10 it was voted that the tax, fourteen hundred and thirteen pounds four shillings and sixpence, be paid by Jan. 1, following, or the men procured, each of whom was to be rated one hundred and twenty-eight pounds nine shillings and sixpence, and every exertion was to be used to procure money and men.

SOLDIERS TO HULL.— It appears that the men were raised with much trouble, but not until after the time set, Dec. 20, and the superintendent refused to receive them. A petition was therefore made to the governor and council to be relieved from the difficulty by a grant of more time. On Sept. 30, 1782, ten soldiers were sent to Hull to assist the French in throwing up fortifications for the defence of the harbor, and these were to be paid "seven dollars per month, if not allowed that by the State"; and on Dec. 2 the town remitted the taxes of "Gideon Colson and Thomas Tirrell, they being in the enemies' hands when the taxes were made."

This concludes a brief sketch of the history of Weymouth during the Revolution, as found upon its records. Very much of its service in men and money must be sought in other directions, and at the best the story must be imperfectly told. Of the official rolls, many are incomplete or wholly missing, but enough remain to show that of a population of about fourteen hundred

people, according to the estimate of Dr. Cotton Tufts, made within two years after the close of the war, the town sent into the various departments of military service, upon the calls of the State and continental authority, at least two hundred men, one in seven of its total inhabitants; and these must have embraced very nearly all of the able-bodied men.¹ It is true that the terms of service were very short in many instances, but however short, the burden of such a large number must have been enormous.

The number who perished upon the field of battle or died in the service cannot be ascertained, but probably not less than thirty or forty, since a list remains of fifteen from the soldiers of the South Precinct alone. The amount of expense attending the payment of the men for wages, bounties and support, also for army supplies, it is almost impossible to estimate, owing to the fluctuating value of the currency, but the various votes already quoted give some idea of its sum.

Of the officers sent into the service from this town, honorable mention is made of Gen. Solomon Lovell, who was in command of the Eastern Military District, of which Boston was the headquarters. He was also in active service in the Rhode Island campaign in 1778, and his brigade did efficient work in the battle before Newport, in which the general was noted for his coolness and bravery. He was also the military commander of the unfortunate Penobscot expedition of the following year, which was unsuccessful, not from any fault of his, but from the want of co-operation on the part of the fleet under command of Com. Saltonstal, who was afterwards cashiered for cowardice and inefficiency. Among the other officers may be named Capt. Thomas Nash, who served under Washington during the siege

¹ See Appendix F.

of Boston, and was officer of the day on the night when Dorchester Heights were taken possession of, Capt. Joseph Trufant, Capt. Samuel Ward, Capt. Asa White, Lieut. Er Cushing, who was with Arnold in the Canada expedition, Lieut. Samuel Kingman, Lieut. Thomas Vinson, Lieut. David Joy, Lieut. Asa Dyer and others.

The record is one of which Weymouth has no reason to be ashamed, although, at times, the work languished and the men refused to go. Money came slowly or not at all, yet the times were such and the demands so many and great that its ability was not sufficient to meet them. It must also be borne in mind that this town was not alone in these deficiencies, but was even more prompt than many, and probably equal to the foremost. The fact stated, that the town sent into the field fully two hundred men, of whom probably nearly a quarter perished, tells a story that it will be difficult to overcome. Hardly a family, or very few, if any, but had one or more representatives in the field during some part of the great struggle, and some throughout its whole duration. The town was also peculiarly fortunate in having for its leaders men of such ability and judgment as those whose names have been mentioned, Dr. Cotton Tufts, Gen. Solomon Lovell, Major James Humphrey and Deacon Nathaniel Bayley, men who were wise in council, skilful and brave in the field, and untiring in their efforts to promote the interests of their country in the momentous struggle in which it was then engaged. Some of the public papers prepared by these men in their official service are models of political documents, and will compare favorably with the best of that day.