

The War on Land

From start to finish, Manchester's men demonstrated courage not only at sea, but also on land, as its men mobilized to fight for American independence.

After the Boston Massacre of March 1770, most Massachusetts communities, including Manchester, turned openly hostile to the British authorities. Clouds of war were gathering on the horizon. In May 1774, a Manchester town meeting affirmed Boston's call for independence. John Lee Jr., Andrew Marsters, and Andrew Woodbury were chosen representatives for the upcoming Essex County Congress of Liberty-men. In June 1774, London closed down the port of Boston and relocated the seat of the provincial government to Salem, with Marblehead as the official port of entry, guarded by a British warship in the harbor. In 1775, Manchester organized its own Committee of Correspondence: John Lee, Jonathan Herrick, Samuel Forster, Jacob Hooper, Aaron Lee, John Edwards, Isaac Lee, Isaac Proctor, and Eleazar Crafts.

On April 19, 1775, a group of Manchester men led by Capt. Andrew Marsters, Lt. Samuel Forster, and Lt. Eleazar Crafts marched toward Lexington after hearing of rising hostilities, joining the 6th Essex County Regiment. However, by the time they reached Medford, some miles east of Lexington, the battle had ended, and the British were already in retreat.

With war beginning to rage on land and sea, Manchester continued preparing its men for action.

On September 25, 1775, the town's Committee of Correspondence ordered Dr. Joseph Whipple to ensure that Manchester's militia were often training and stationed at watch posts around town. According to enlistment records, over fifty Manchester men signed up to fight in the Revolutionary War between 1775 and 1777. A lack of definitive records nevertheless means that the real number of Manchester men and boys who fought is likely much higher.

In the years of war that ensued, the list of Manchester patriots included Eleazar Crafts, who led troops to Saratoga, New York. There in 1777, American forces were gearing up to fight British troops led by General John Burgoyne. Joining other American forces, Crafts and his men helped to rout out 900 British regulars trying to seize an arsenal. The Battle of Saratoga saw the British defeat and became a significant turning point for American victory in the war.

Other notable army patriots from Manchester include Nathaniel Allen, who crossed the Delaware with Washington's Army in 1776; Benjamin Crafts, who served during the 1775 Siege of Boston and continued to support the war from the homefront after his discharge; and Col. John Lee who served in the 6th Essex County Regiment, 2nd Company. A memorial to Col. Lee's service can be found in Manchester's 1661 Burial Ground.

The American Revolution ended in victory in 1783, and Manchester rejoiced. When word of peace made its way to Manchester, the story goes that the town's cannon was dragged around town in celebration by two war veterans, Benjamin Leach and Joseph Kelham, followed by a jubilant crowd. The last survivor of Manchester's Revolutionary War soldiers was Ebenezer Tappan, who died May 16, 1849. Manchester bore its part in the American Revolution by land in addition to the sea, from the opening action to the final victory.

Revolutionary

Manchester