Recently, we had a request for research from a man in Indiana who had bought a New England Trucking Company (NETCO) fire truck. He wanted as much information as we could provide. When we looked in our subject files, the information was sparse. Fortunately, we recalled that Maurice (Mo) Tremblay had done some research on NETCO and the Wachusett Trucking Company so we called on him for assistance. He loaned us written copy, photocopies of truck photos and two framed photographs. Now we could make copies for our collection and also could send information to the man in Indiana.

NETCO was located at 80 to 86 Lunenburg Street (Route 2A) in Fitchburg. E.J. Welch and F.S. Suthergreen became partners as dealers, repairers and renters of motor cars at this address. They also became distributors of motor car products. In 1915, they advertised in the City Directory under the NETCO name but their display ad was for Welch and Suthergreen Co. advertising Peerless and Hudson motor cars and Peerless and Federal trucks. Their 1916 ad in the City Directory advertises trucks built by NETCO but production began earlier according to the Fitchburg Daily Sentinel. An article in the Sentinel on December 10, 1915 describes the NETCO building of trucks when one truck a week was produced. An order form from NETCO identifies the following equipment on all trucks: cab, speedometer, horn, headlights, Prest-O-lite tank, tail lamp, traction chains and full set of tools including a jack. Buyers chose body type, length, width, height, paint color, wheels, tires – front and rear, lettering and any extra equipment. The trucks carried a ninety day warranty and a payment plan was available.

The trucks produced varied from 1 1/2 to 5 tons. A number of Fitchburg companies owned NETCO trucks. From photocopies, we were able to identify Wiley and Foss, J. Cushing Co. grain and hay, Iver Johnson’s Arms and Cycling Works and the city of Fitchburg Sewer Department.

Fire trucks were one area of specialization for NETCO. A large display ad appears in the Sentinel on March 3, 1917 that proudly advertises BUILT IN
**New England Trucking Company (cont...)**

FITCHBURG NETCO FIRE APPARATUS AND MOTOR TRUCKS. Five pictures of fire trucks are included in the ad. The city of Fitchburg was among those who bought fire trucks from NETCO. We have photocopied of Fire Engine Number 1 and Fitchburg Hose B. Many firemen said they were fast, powerful, and better than other makes. A six cylinder fire truck sold for $4,250 in 1918. The electric headlights and electric starter were two hundred dollars extra.

When sales of their regular line of trucks fell because of the Great Depression, NETCO started building much larger trucks with 2 to 10 ton capacity. Prices for these ranged from $1800 to $4900.

Another area of specialization was trucks designed to clean catch basins, also known as storm drains. The city of Worcester annual report in 1919 credited NETCO Catch Basin Cleaners with cutting their cleaning costs, previously done by hand.

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In 1961, Alphonse J. Welch, the last president of NETCO, died. In 1962, the assets and facilities were sold at auction. Peter’s Battery Station took over the NETCO building.

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**Spirit of ‘74: The First American Revolution**

On September 7, 1774, 4,622 militiamen from towns in Worcester County assembled on Main Street in Worcester to assert their dissatisfaction with British government. They seized the county courthouse which was controlled by the crown. To celebrate the 240th anniversary of this event, there will be a Worcester County-wide read of Ray Raphael’s book. Limited copies of the book can be checked out at the Fitchburg Public Library.

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**Tuesday August 13 at 6**

*The heyday of transportation by rail in New England has come and gone, but when it was here, Union Station was the epicenter.*

**Written by: Maurice J. Tremblay and Shirley Wagner**

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**Thanks To All Of The People Who Contributed Time And Effort To This Newsletter:**

Simone Blake; Katrina Brown; Joy Contois; Kathy Flynn; Cindy Jones; Susan Navarre; Maurice (Mo) Tremblay; And Shirley Wagner!
As a local history buff, I’ve often been asked, “How can I find the military history on a Revolutionary soldier?” Whether you are compiling data to become an S.R.K. or D.A.R. member, doing family genealogy, or working on a school assignment, the answer is easier than you might suspect. I’ve chosen two soldiers as examples: Sgt. Ephraim Osborn and Private Daniel Harris, who both lived in Fitchburg in 1775.

Fitchburg Historical Society has an amazing collection of local, state, and federal data of military records for the Revolutionary War. The massive, 27-volume Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War, published in Boston by Wright and Potter Printing Company (1906), is the best place to begin your research. Simply look up the soldier or sailor by his last name (as you would look up a name in a telephone book today).

While those who joined local militia groups are not usually found in Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors, the men who volunteered for the Continental Army are all listed in this extraordinary resource. It’s surprising, but some men only served for 6 days while others served several 3 month stints over the next five years of the war.

Initially, I found Ephraim Osborn on a list of volunteers who answered the alarm on April 19, 1775. However, the federal listing merely states:

“Ephraim Osborn Private in Capt. Thomas Cowdin’s company; Col. Samuel Denny’s regiment; enlisted Nov. 1, 1776; 5 months; rolls dated Camp at Hull.”

So, I looked for further info in Fitchburg Soldiers of the Revolution authored by James Garfield in 1908 and printed by the Fitchburg Sentinel. This book gave both family history and military history for Osborn, Daniel Harris and every other Fitchburg man who served in either the local militias or the Continental Army.

I also checked Rufin Torrey’s book History of the Town of Fitchburg, Massachusetts. This book dates from 1836; while it gave me a more general history (not specific records), it provided stories so that I could read “between the lines” of official documentation. I also found information on both these men in the Daniel Harris biography files located in the Society’s collection. This, in turn, sent me to the 1764 and 1830 Fitchburg Maps. By looking at the maps, I learned that the two men were neighbors. Soon, I realized that both homes are still functioning as residences 239 years later!

The Harris biography file provided stories of their experiences while fighting at the Siege of Boston; their discharges years later; and their long walk home…from Saratoga, New York to Fitchburg.

The listing for Daniel Harris in Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War states:

“Harris, Daniel F. Private, Capt. Eleazer Bridge’s Co., Col. John Whiteman’s regiment of Minute-men, which answered the alarm of April 19,1775 to Cambridge, left place of rendezvous April 25, 1775; service 6 days; also Capt. John Fuller’s co., Col. Asa Whitney’s regiment; muster roll dated Aug. 1, 1775; enlisted April 25,1775; service 3 months ½ day; also, order for bounty coat or its equivalent in money dated Camp at Prospect Hill, Nov. 14, 1775; also order on Deacon Jeffers Paymaster for Colony Troops, payable to company Ephraim Jackson, dated Camp at Hull, July 10, 1776, signed by said Harris and others belonging to Capt. Alishai Brown’s company; Col. Whitney’s regiment for advance pay, blanket, money, etc.; also Private Alishai Brown’s company, Col. Josiah Whitney’s regiment; enlisted June 1, 1776; service on Nov. 1, 1776, 3 months; rolls dated Camp at Hull.”

This is an unusually long entry, and it contains interesting information such as what is bounty? Once again, Garfield’s little booklet Fitchburg Soldiers of the Revolution provided detail on bounty as well as every town’s responsibility for financial issues for their town’s soldiers. Such histories fill out the story or stories of the men and their communities.

The one major problem you might find in Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors in the Revolutionary War is that both the town’s responsibility for financial issues for their town’s soldiers. Such histories fill out the story or stories of the men and their communities.

On February 3, 1764, Fitchburg was incorporated as a separate town. On February 3, 2014 at noon, church bells along Main Street rang out in celebration for 15 minutes. At 6 that evening, Fitchburg citizens gathered in the Armory Building, now the home of this community, to celebrate the 250th anniversary. It was an evening of remembering past achievements and looking to the future of the city.

The procession for the ceremony was a color guard of local re-enactors portraying the Minuteman from Fitchburg, led by city solicitor, Stephen Barrett. The procession included Congresswoman Nikki Tsongas, State Representative Stephen DiNatale, Mayor Lisa Wong, the five living former mayors - Dan Mylott (2004-8), Mary Whitney (1998-2002), Jeff Bean, Bill Flynn, and David Gilmartin - and city council and school committee members. The Fitchburg High School Band and choral members led the singing of the National Anthem.

Ray C, longtime voice of Fitchburg on WPKZ radio, was the emcee for the evening, introducing the speakers and providing the audience with a timeline of historical events in Fitchburg. Lisa Wong gave a short speech about the city, quoting Doris Kirkpatrick-Fitchburg historian, who noted in The City and the River that Fitchburg has re-created herself many times throughout her history.

Nikki Tsongas brought congratulations from the House of Representatives. Steve DiNatale presented citations from both the Massachusetts House of Representatives and the Massachusetts Senate. Each of the mayors read a proclamation establishing six initiatives to be carried out in this year.

The ceremony ended with members of the Fitchburg High Chorus singing “Fitchburg, O. Fitchburg,” a song written for the 200th anniversary of the city. The music was by Madeline Gaylord and the words were by Louis Shepard, Professor of English at Fitchburg State. Each of the guests received a Fitchburg 250 - 1764-2014 decal and a framed “You are the key to the city’s future” plaque for display. Refreshments were provided by the Senior Center.
Remembering Janet Mirijanian Cragin

Janet Mirijanian Cragin (1934-2014) loved and celebrated the history of Fitchburg, her hometown. She researched and portrayed the lives of a number of important Fitchburg women, including some of the Crocker women. The 1952 Boulder, yearbook of Fitchburg High School, described Janet as one of the “peppiest girls in our class.” Her peppiness continued throughout her life and helped to raise the spirits of everyone who encountered her.

Janet believed in Fitchburg, its people and its potential. She graduated from Fitchburg High School and attended the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York for about a year. She earned her bachelor of education and her master of education degrees from Fitchburg State College. Janet started her teaching career at the Richardson School and then taught at Applewild School until she retired.

Throughout her life, Janet was a cultural and dramatic presence. She was in high school plays and had such comedic presence that some of her classmates believed she would become another Imogene Coca. Instead, Janet used her talents to benefit her community.

Beginning in 1962, she acted in and directed dozens of plays at the Stratton Playhouse. In the Bicentennial in 1964, she played the American Muse. Janet received two New England Theatre Conference awards during her career. The actors she brought to the stage in Fitchburg were ordinary people working and living in the community. When the Stratton Playhouse burned to the ground in 2011, Janet and her daughter Sally started the Riverfront Children’s Theatre. For all of these reasons, Janet was recognized as a Legendary Local by the Fitchburg Historical Society in February, 2014.

Janet brought out the best in everyone she met. She encouraged all of us to do things we never thought we could do. She left each of us with a little of her spirit. We honor her by believing in Fitchburg, celebrating its history and promoting its cultural activities.

Written by: Shirley Wagner

FITCHBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL APPEAL
Yes, I am pleased to contribute to the Annual Appeal of the Fitchburg Historical Society. Please accept my contribution of $_____, to be used for your general operations.

Name: ____________________________

Address: ____________________________

Email: ____________________________

Website: fitchburghistoricalsociety.org

☐ I have included a check payable to the Fitchburg Historical Society
☐ Please charge the credit card I have listed below: ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard
Card #: ____________________________ Exp. Date: ______ CVC: ______
“Spirit of ’74 County-Wide Read”: Discussion of Ray Raphael’s “First American Revolution”
Wednesday, August 13, 6 p.m. at the Fitchburg Historical Society
Monday, August 18, 6:30 p.m. at the Fitchburg Public Library

Fitchburg Historical Society Annual Meeting Thursday, September 18 at 6 p.m.
Learn more about the Historical Society, as it celebrates its 122nd year, and Fitchburg’s 250th anniversary.
A look back and a look ahead, and the public is invited. Free admission

“Reflections of the Past” Treasures from Local Historic Societies
On view through September 27, 2014 The Gardner Museum, 28 Pearl Street, Gardner, MA. A selection from the collection of the Fitchburg Historical Society is presented in collaboration with the Gardner Museum and other area historical collections.

Veterans’ Day Celebration: Tuesday, November 11, 1:00 p.m. featuring a potluck lunch.
Check our web calendar at fitchburghistoricalsociety.org for our calendar of events!