

## History of Isaac Train

(One of the "Green Mountain Boys")

In one of the petitions filed in the National Archives, Isaac states that he was born in the town of Adams, Berkshire, Massachusetts on the 22nd day of May 1759 - he has no record of his age and knows the same only from his recollection of the information given to him by his friends and relatives. Nothing more is known of his early life until he joined the Militia or Army at the age of 17 years.

The winter of 1775 and the spring of 1776 saw the American Army in the North trying to take Quebec from the British, under General Carleton. The American Commander Montgomery had come from Montreal to aid General Arnold in taking Quebec, but now in the early spring with Montgomery dead Arnold from his sick-bed assumed command of the army outside Quebec. He pulled his forces together and tried to check the flight of deserters to Montreal.

Captain Zebulon Sabin commanding a company of Americans in Colonel Seth Warner's Regiment sent Lt. Jonathan Meacham back to his hometown of Adams, Massachusetts for the purpose of enlisting men to fill vacancies in their company. Isaac Train at the age of 17 was one of those who answered the call to enlist, and he did so on 1 February 1776 for the term of three months. Late in February Lt. Meacham, Isaac Train and 17 others left Adams and joined their company on the Plains of Abraham just outside of Quebec.

The native farmers around Quebec refused to furnish food for Arnold's men and Small-pox visited the camp. Isaac Train states in

a petition that shortly after his arrival at Quebec, he had the Small-pox.

Isaac Train was in the Commissary Department and many of the stories he later related were of the straits he was often in to obtain food for the army.

About this time the old, antiquated, lethargic General David Wooster, relic of the French and Indian War, was sent from Montreal to replace the ailing Arnold. Now the Canadian story ran to a tragic end. Wooster was completely inept before Quebec and was succeeded within a month by General John Thomas, who was appointed by Congress to take command. While he was making plans the British received reinforcements from England. Carlston their commander quickly organized a force of 900, sailed out, and drove the Americans into a panic toward the Sorell River.

Isaac Train's petition states: "That after his recovery from Small-pox he remained at Quebec until the fore-part of May when the American army retreated from that place; he together with seven others was discharged from said company at the mouth of the Sorrel River and returned immediately home to Adams, where he arrived on 22 May 1776. That he recollects the day of his arrival at home from the fact that it was his birthday. That he did not receive a written discharge when he was dismissed from said company, serving beyond the time for which he enlisted. That immediately after returned from Canada aforesaid according to the best of his recollection about three days thereafter he enlisted at Adams aforesaid in a company of Militia commanded by Captain William

White for the term of three months, that said company belonged to a regiment commanded by a Colonel Benjamin Simonds, that said company joined said regiment at Williamstown, Hampshire County, Massachusetts. That from Williamstown the said regiment marched to Saratoga in the State of New York. That soon after their arrival at Saratoga Colonel Simonds left the said regiment under the command of Major Statten of the same regiment and returned to Massachusetts and later did resume the said command. That he (Isaac Train) remained with said regiment as Saratoga aforesaid in an encampment which had been formed at that place for the purpose of guarding the country from the depredations of the Indians until May, the expiration of said term of three months, when the said regiment left that place and returned to Williamstown where he was discharged. That in the Summer of 1777 and he thinks about first of July he enlisted in a company of Militia commanded by Captain (Enos) Parker in the regiment commanded by Colonel Seth Warner. That he enlisted at Adams aforesaid where he resided. That from Adams he marched with said company to Williamstown and from there to Bennington (Vermont) and from thence to Allerton, and from thence to Skeensborough, from thence to several places on the frontier of Vermont and back to Adams where he was discharged. That he was employed in guarding the frontiers of Vermont during said time from the depredations of the Indians. That he was discharged at last aforesaid place on the 14th of August 1777 and did not receive a written discharge. That he recollects the time of his discharge from the fact that the morning after he was so

discharged the alarm was given of the arrival of the British troops at Bennington."

During the Spring and Summer of 1777 the British had made every preparation for an active, aggressive campaign against the Americans. Their troops were kept under constant discipline, large bodies of reinforcements were brought from England and Germany, so that the available British forces amounted to over 10,000 men, besides a considerable body of Canadians and Indian allies. The whole army was put under the command of General Burgoyne who was constantly employed in arranging his plans for the Summer and adding to his strength. Burgoyne advanced on Ticonderoga and after its evacuation by the Americans he pursued them on to Hubbardton where on the morning of July 7 they were overtaken and a sharp battle ensued.

While these events were transpiring, the administrative powers of the newly declared state of Vermont were in convention at Windsor, engaged in the work of agreeing upon and adopting a State Constitution; but when the news of the successive disasters to the American Armies reached them all was confusion and disorder. They returned to their homes as soon as possible to defend themselves. A Committee of Safety was chosen for the state of Vermont and on July 15 they issued a proclamation which read: "To all the militia officers whom it may concern... your immediate assistance is absolutely necessary. A few hundred military troops to be joined to our present strength would greatly add to our present encouragement, as by late information we learn that a large scout

of the enemy are disposed to take a tour to this post... The Council of Safety then attended to the affairs of the government, but their situation was very unpleasant, as the Constitution had only recently declared the district to be a Free State and the Government was not organized. No money or revenue was at their command so they authorized the seizure of the goods and chattels of all persons who should join the common enemy, and that all property so seized should be sold at public vendus, and the proceeds paid to the treasurer of the Council of Safety, for the purpose of paying the bounties and wages of a regiment to be raised for the defense of the state. It became necessary to establish a headquarters for military stores and supplies, also provisions sufficient to sustain their forces for a considerable length of time. These were purchased and stored in Bennington. This fact became known to the British, and Burgoyne, their commander, decided upon a campaign against the town in order that he might become possessed of the stores.

Burgoyne had supposed, erroneously however, that the greater part of the people living on the east side of the Lake Champlain and the Hudson River, were Tories and opposed to the War, and that it was only necessary for him to march an army into their country, and supply them with arms in order to bring them into the royal service.

Isaac Train states: "That he immediately volunteered again under said Parker in Colonel Benjamin Simonds Regiment and marched with him from Adams to Bennington and was engaged in the battle at

that place (16 August 1777) on the following day, and the next succeeding day returned to Adams."

For events of the battle the following description is given by Zadock Thompson who was there: "On the morning of the 16th of August General Stark was joined by Colonel Symonds with a small body of Militia from Berkshire County, Massachusetts (Isaac train was among these), having reconnoitered the enemy's post, he proceeded to carry into effect the previous arrangements for the attack. Colonel Nichols was detailed with 200 men to the rear of the left wing of the enemy, and Colonel Herrick with 300 men to the rear of the right wing. These were to join and then make the attack. Colonels Hubbard and Stickney were also ordered to advance with 200 men on their right and 100 in front to divert the enemy's attention from the real point of attack. As the division of Nichols and Herrick approached each other in the rear of the enemy, the Indians, apprehensive of being surrounded, made their escape between the two corps, excepting three killed and two wounded by the fire of the Americans as they passed. Their positions being taken, at three o'clock in the afternoon the action was commenced by Colonel Nicholas, and his example was quickly followed by the other divisions. General Stark advanced slowly in front, till the firing announced the commencement of the attack in the rear. He then rushed forward and attacked the division of Tories, and in a few minutes the action became general. It lasted, says Stark in his official account, two hours, and was the hottest I ever saw. It was like one continued clap of thunder. The German dragoons

made a brave resistance, and when their ammunition was expended they were led on by Colonel Baum, and attacked the Americans, sword in hand. But their bravery was unavailing, they were finally overpowered, their works carried on all points, and their two cannon taken. Colonel Baum was mortally wounded and fell into the hands of the Americans, and all of his men, with the exception of those who escaped to the woods, were either killed or taken prisoner." "The prisoners were collected together and sent off under a strong guard to the meetinghouse in Bennington, and Stark, unsuspecting of danger, suffered his men to scatter in pursuit of refreshments and plunder. In this state of things intelligence was received that the reinforcement of the enemy, under Colonel Breyman, with two field-pieces, was rapidly approaching, and only two miles distant. Stark endeavored to rally his exhausted forces; but before he could put them in a condition to make an effective resistance, the enemy advanced upon them in regular order and commenced the attack. They opened an incessant fire from their fire from their artillery and small arms, which was for awhile returned by the Americans with much spirit; but exhausted fatigue and hunger, overpowered by numbers, they at length began slowly, but in good order, to retreat before the enemy disputing the ground inch by inch."

At this critical juncture, when defeat and disaster seemed inevitable, the regiment commanded by Major Strafford appeared upon the scene; and mortified that they had not arrived sooner to have participated in the first engagement, they made such a fierce

attack upon the enemy as to stop their advance. This second battle was carried on with great determination on both sides until sunset, when the British gave way and fled in confusion from the field. The Americans pursued them till dark, and with one hour more of daylight, says Stark's report, he should have captured the whole force. With this victory there came into the possession of the Americans four brass cannons, four ammunition wagons, and seven hundred prisoners with their arms and accoutrements. The loss to the Americans was 30 killed and about 40 wounded, while the British lost, in killed, 207, who were left upon the field. "This victory," said Governor Hall, "Was the first check given to the triumphant march of Burgoyne from Canada, and was an unexpected example of a successful assault by undisciplined Militia armed with muskets without bayonets, upon an entrenched camp of veteran troops, defended by cannon. By its depressing effect on the spirits of the enemy, and the confidence in their own powers with which it inspired the Americans, the current of success was at once turned from the British to the American Army."

Isaac Train's petition further states: "That in the fall of the same year (1777) he volunteered in a company commanded by Captain Reuben Hinman of the Regiment commanded by Colonel Benjamin Simonds at Adams, Berkshire County, Massachusetts where he then resided and was employed for about the term of two months upon the frontiers of Vermont in guarding against the depredations of the Indians. That he has forgotten the name of most of the places through which he passed during said expedition but recollects that

he passed through Skeenesborough town, state of New York and remained there four days. That he returned with said company to the now state of Vermont where he was dismissed. That he did not receive a written discharge at the time he was so dismissed. (On 18 May 1778 Isaac Train's name appears on a return giving his age as 21 years; stature 5 ft. 8 in.; and complexion, light.)

That in the year 1778 and according to the best of his recollection about the first of July of that year he enlisted at Athol in Worcester County, Massachusetts, where he than resided, for the term of nine months in a Company commanded by Lieutenant Cooper. The said company had been previously been commanded by a Captain Williams, but that by some arrangement the said Captain Williams had left the command of the said Company. That said Company belonged to Colonel Rufus Putnam's Regiment of General Nixon's Brigade of Massachusetts line. That he joined the said Regiment at Fishkill, New York and from thence marched to West Point. That after remaining a short time at that place they marched to an encampment at White Plains where they remained a considerable length of time and then went to Harlem Heights to Winter Quarters where they built huts and lay until about the month of February 1779, when they went to Tellare Point, Cortland Manor and remained there about a month employed in constructing a bridge across Croton River, when he was discharged at the expiration of his said term. That he received a written certificate of his discharge signed by Colonel Rufus Putnam and lost it nearly thirty years since. That he has not been able, after diligent search, to

find any evidence of the said last mentioned term of service.

That shortly after his discharge as last aforesaid he again entered the service in a Company commanded by Captain Jarius Wilcox as a substitute for Asa Hall who was absent from said Company on furlough and agreed to serve in his stead ten days until he should return. That said Hall did not return to said Company until the expiration of 21 days and that during that time the applicant (Isaac Train) served in Said Company until said Hall did return. The paper writing to this declaration annexed dated 9 March 1779 on which he had signed at the time; and the said Hall took his place in the said Company and applicant was dismissed.

Vital records of Athol, Worcester County, Massachusetts show at this time Isaac Train married Elizabeth Commings on 17 September 1779. That in the year 1780 and as he thinks in the month of April he enlisted at Athol in the County of Worcester in the state of Massachusetts in a Company commanded by Captain Hendricks of the Regiment commanded by Colonel Vorce (Voss), in Lieutenant Nixon's Brigade of the Massachusetts line for the term of nine months. That he joined the said Regiment at Fishkill and from thence marched to West Point and was employed at that place until some time in the summer in constructing Fort Putnam and from thence into New Jersey where they were stationed for short periods at different places, the names of which he does not recollect. That at the time (General Benedict) Arnold passed down the river after his attempt to surrender West Point, the applicant (Isaac Train) was at Dobbs Ferry. That in the fall of that year he returned to West Point

where he continued to the end of his term of enlistment when he was discharged by virtue of a written discharge which he has lost. That he has not been able to procure any evidence of his said service except the affidavit of Robert Love which states: "That in the year 1780 he enlisted into a command let by Captain Hendricks in Colonel Voss' Regiment, that Isaac Train then lived in Athol and enlisted in the same company, they enlisted for nine months and served their times out, that they were Mas-mates; during the campaign they went to West Point from where they went to Robinsons farm, and joined their company, they lay at Robinsons farm some time then went into New Jersey and spent the larger part of the season in that State; late in the fall or winter they returned to West Point for winter quarters, where they remained until they were discharged which was in the month of January." Isaac Train's petition continues: "That he lived in Athol after the War about two years, ten in Greenwich in the same County about four or six years (It was here on 12 November 1795 that our ancestor Elizabeth Train was born), then removed to Middlesex, Rutland County, Vermont and resided there 14 or 15 years, than removed to Nelson, Madison County, New York and lived there 10 or 12 years and thence removed to Urbana, Steuben County, New York where he has now (1832) resided since his removal from Madison County. That in his present neighborhood he is known to other who can testify as to his character for truth and veracity and their belief of his service as a soldier of the Revolution.

In 1833 Isaac Train was placed on the Revolutionary War Pension Rolls of Steuben County, New York for his services as a private in the Militia. He was age 74 and his pension was to commence 1831 at the rate of \$80.00 per year.

In the 1840 census of Pensioners of the Revolution Isaac Train is given as age 81 living with the family of William Bird (his son-in-law) at Urbanna, Steuben County, New York.

A few other details of Isaac Train's life are mentioned in a letter written in 1905 by his great-grand-daughter in a letter:

"I remember my great-grand-father Train distinctly, having spent one winter (1841) with his daughter, Mrs. Pamela Train Bird of Hammondsport, Steuben County, New York with whom he resided until his death which occurred in the early forties, if I remember correctly. He was eighty years old, I think when I knew him, I was eight. My recollections of him are very vivid and fanciful, however, for soldiers were not so common in those days as they are now and I thought possibly he might get offended some time and kill us all with that terrible sword that hung over the head of his bed... Was perfectly delighted when he let me take his big wallet of 'Pension Money' (all in silver dollars) to count when I got home-sick." As the letter states, he died in Urbana, New York 19 August 1843. His wife followed him in death 14 years later on 18 January 1857.