

This is NewsLetter Issue No. Four ~ For the year 2025

Join, Or Die



The phrase “Join, Or Die.”, appearing as the caption for a cartoon drawn by Benjamin Franklin, was a rallying call for the Patriots during the American Revolutionary War.

Wasn't it? What? It wasn't? But it is calling for the thirteen colonies to unite for the

common good, isn't it? And it was suggesting that if the individual colonies did not work together, each one could easily be attacked and conquered, wasn't it?

Well, the fact of the matter is that the cartoon drawing was indeed drawn by Benjamin

Franklin which he indeed included in an issue of his newspaper, the *Pennsylvania Packet*. The only problem is that Franklin included the cartoon in the issue published on 9 May 1754. Wait a minute! The year 1754 was not one of the years during which the Revolutionary War was fought. The Revolution started on 19 April 1775 with the Battles of Lexington and Concord and extended until 3 September 1783 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris that officially ended the War.

So look at those dates. The year 1754 was twenty-one years before the Revolutionary War's beginning and twenty-nine years before the end of the War.

And another thing; Look at the colonies represented on the cartoon. Starting at the head you find "N.E." representing New England. Of course "New England" was not a single colony, but the names of Massachusetts~Bay, Rhode Island & Providence Plantations, Connecticut and New Hampshire would have been difficult for Mr. Franklin to fit into the cartoon. The initials "N" and "E" was sufficient for any reader to know what it included. "N.Y" represented New York. "N.J." represented New Jersey. "P" represented Pennsylvania. "M" represented Maryland. "V" represented Virginia." "N.C." represented North Carolina. And finally "S.C." represented South Carolina. So that covers the "Thirteen Original Colonies", doesn't it? NO! That includes only

eleven of the Thirteen Colonies. Where is "D" for Delaware, and "G" for Georgia?

The cartoon drawn by Benjamin Franklin for his newspaper did not include representations on the snake for Delaware and Georgia, because in 1754 those two colonies didn't exist.

The cartoon might have been used by other printers during the Revolutionary War, but it was not widely used. Nor was the slogan "Join, Or Die" used. The recently displayed TV Series on The American Revolution by Ken Burns had a short segment on John Paul Jones and his exploits around the British Isles. It was stated that Jones had a flag made and flown on his flagship, the Bonhomme Richard, that displayed a pine tree at the top, the segmented snake in the middle and the phrase "Join, Or Die." At the bottom. No paintings exist to reveal if that was a fact or not. If it did actually take place, it probably was the only instance in which the cartoon's elements were used during the Revolution.

The belief that the cartoon was used to rally the troops during the American Revolutionary War is probably a belief that appeared around the same time that the first flag was believed to have been sewn by Betsey Ross and that George Washington, as a young child, was believed to have told his father that he could not tell a lie and that he chopped down the cherry tree.



Depredations on the Pennsylvania Frontier

I'm pleased to announce that I have finally found a publisher willing to take on my book, *Depredations on the Pennsylvania Frontier*. Higginson Books, located at Morgantown, Pennsylvania has agreed to publish the book. Final pricing has not been determined, but the publisher believes that there will be a hardcover edition that will cost about \$90 and a softcover edition that will cost about \$50. If you are interested in purchasing a copy, let me know and I will keep you informed as the book is produced.

Some Mis-Quoted or Mis-Attributed Sayings

Usually we think of *history* as being solid and real and unchanging. But that type of thinking doesn't take into account that people sometimes get in the way of history and as the facts of history are being repeated, little bits of errors get sprinkled through the true history. That is what has happened to a number of sayings that, as they have been quoted down through the years, they have become slightly wrong.

Thomas Paine began his *The American Crisis* with a sentence that has become very famous. It was: "*These are the times that try men's souls.*" He was vaguely referring to the 1760's and 1770's. But over the years the sentence has been attributed to having been said by General George Washington during the winter of 1777/78 while the Continental Army was in bivouac at Valley Forge.

A second example is attributed to Patrick Henry during the Virginia Convention of 1775. He is often quoted as saying "*I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!*" Mr. Henry is claimed to have made that statement at the end of a speech he gave on 23 March 1775, but the text of his speech was not written down until 1817, forty-two years after the fact. Do you remember the exact words spoken by someone forty-two years after you heard it? William Wirt is claimed to have been the one who 'reconstructed' Henry's speech forty-two years after the fact. I wonder if he made any mistakes with it?

Which one of the Founding Fathers loudly proclaimed: "*We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor*"? It no doubt was Benjamin Franklin, who set it into type for one of his newspapers or almanacs. Or maybe it was that Boston firebrand, Samuel

Adams, who stood up during a session of the Continental Congress to rouse the troops, so to speak. No. Those words constitute part of the last sentence of the text of the Declaration of Independence. It was never a spoken phrase other than when someone was reading the Declaration of Independence.

Paul Revere, on the night of 18 April 1775, rode his horse at a gallop through the back country of the Massachusetts-Bay Colony shouting loudly "*The British Are Coming, The British Are Coming!*". Well not really. The poem/tale that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow composed in 1860 made that claim, but Paul Revere probably did not yell anything. His famous 'ride' was to the village of Concord to warn the members of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, then sitting at Concord, that the British Regulars were on the march out of Boston. And although it is not known for sure if he shouted anything, it would have been "*The Regulars Are Coming, The Regulars Are Coming*" because everyone residing in the English colonies believed themselves to be 'British'. There would have been no reason for Revere to shout "*We Are Coming, We Are Coming!*" The word used at that time for the British troops was 'Regulars', and so if anything was shouted it would have been that the Regulars were coming.

The ultra-famous sentence that General Israel Putnam spoke to his soldiers on the summit of Bunker Hill "*Don't fire 'til you see the whites of their eyes*" surely was not mis-quoted or mis-attributed. Well, the quote did not appear in print until Mason Weem's *Life of George Washington* was published in 1808 ~ thirty-three years after the actual event. In fact, the line from Weem's book states: "*don't throw away a single shot, but take good aim, nor touch a trigger, till*

you can see the whites of their eyes.” In his book, Mason Weems provided no source of his statement. And recent research on the event has

suggested that it wasn't even General Putnam, but rather Colonel William Prescott that made the original order to the troops.

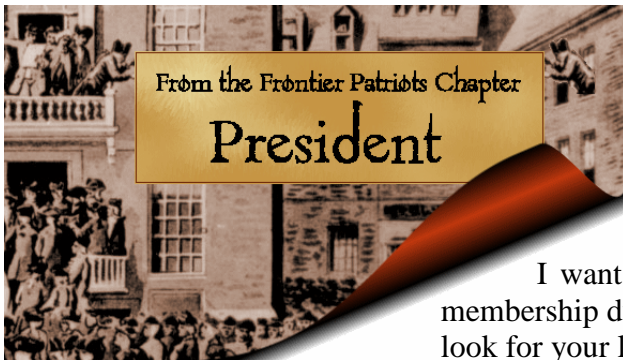
My Ancestor, the Farmer/the Private

My ancestor, or rather many of my ancestors, were farmers who listened to the voices of the local people of influence ~ justices of the peace, pastors, men of wealth and businessmen ~ and made the decision to support the Patriot Cause. They joined the Continental Line and they joined the county Militia. When they could not physically serve in the armed forces, they harvested their crops and supplied the armies. If they could not provide crops, they paid the so-called 'Supply Taxes' which were intended to pay for the things needed by the armies, such as clothing, arms and ammunition and victuals. There were many ways to be a Patriot. And we must not forget that women could be Patriots too.

Anyone who engages in genealogical research

will know that the search for ancestors, especially those who helped to create our nation, can result in great family pride.

It's very exciting to discover that one's ancestor was commissioned as an officer and to be proud of their achievements in that role. But the descendant of a private should be just as proud of their ancestor. Not much would ever have got done if the army was made up only of officers. If the army had consisted only of officers, it would have dissolved into shouting matches and arguments as each officer vied for dominance over the others. Without privates, the army could not have functioned.



The next meeting of the
Frontier Patriots Chapter
of the Sons of the American Revolution
will be held at Hoss's restaurant
at Wye Switches, Duncansville, PA
on Saturday, 13 December 2025
starting at 12 Noon.

I want to remind everyone who have not paid their annual membership dues yet, the dues are due by 15 December 2025. Please look for your letter that you probably put in that drawer or maybe behind the toaster and get your check sent off to the PASSAR Treasurer Michael Seibert as soon as possible. And please don't be offended if I send you a reminder ~ it's my job as both the Chapter President and Chapter Treasurer.

For those of you that receive this newsletter by US mail, if you have an email address, we would appreciate you informing us of it to use for future newsletters. Printing and mailing these newsletters is not that expensive, but it is time consuming. Please send to our Secretary Larry Smith at schmitt@motherbedford.com

Frontier Patriots Chapter website:

<https://frontierpatriots.com>