

# MORNING REPORT

of Benjamin Whitcomb's Independent Corps of Rangers.

Being the ramblings of a Soldier who has smelled too much of Congress's Gunpowder and king George's Lackeys.

## MAY, 2008

The renderings of this Instant include—

**CALENDAR: 10-11 May: Annual RustOff Gathering; Fort Ti.**

**17-18 May: Daniel Boone Homestead; Birdsboro, PA.**

**24-25 May: Military Timeline; Plattsburgh, NY.**

**30 May-1 Jun: War in Schohary; Blenheim, NY.**

**JIM'S JAWINGS:** Jim's hopes for the future.

**ELECTIONS:** Who's running this show?

**CLEAN UP YOUR ACT:** How to help Jim see his hopes come to pass.

**TWIRLING THE DISTAFF:** Wet-nursing 102.

**RANGERS:** Abner Barlow's interesting notes.

And MUCH, MUCH more! Well, at least much more.

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**10-11 May: Annual RustOff Gathering; Fort Ti.**

Here we are again at the start of another season meeting at one of the most historic sites in the country. Whenever I go to Ti, I always think I'm walking/camping/playing on some of the very same ground on which the original Rangers did their thing. When you think about it, we kinda take the site for granted 'cause we are so close to it and go there almost at our leisure but, there are people in our hobby who may only get there once or twice in their lifetime.

Anyways, since Sun. is Mother's Day, we are, again, going to concentrate our activities on Sat. For those of you wishing to arrive Fri. eve., the site is extremely gracious and trusting in us by leaving the usual participants' entrance open for us. It will be closed and latched but not locked so be sure to leave it that way when you enter or leave. Last I knew, some will be staying on for Sun. as well.

Aside from the usual drilling and all-around cleaning up of our act, there are a couple other things to be done. For one, we will briefly go over the events that have been chosen for

participation. Those are listed below. For another, we need to hold elections. The nominations are also listed below.

### **2008 Events**

Following are the events that at least one person said they would attend.

- 17-18 May: Boone Homestead; Birdsboro, PA.**
- 24-25 May: Military Timeline; Plattsburgh, NY.**
- 30 May-1 Jun: War in Schohary; Blenheim, NY.**
- 6-8 Jun: W. Boyleston, MA.**
- 6-8 Jun: Johnson Hall, Johnstown, NY.**
- 14-15 Jun: Pirate Festival; LCMM.**
- 21-22 Jun: VT History Expo; Tunbridge, VT.**
- 5-6 Jul: Hubbardton.**
- 19-20 Jul: Mt. I.**
- 2-3 Aug: Sturbridge Vil.; Sturbridge, MA.**
- 16-17 Aug: Rabble in Arms; LCMM.**
- 23-24 Aug: Battle of Newtown; Newtown, NY.**
- 6-7 Sep: Ti Rev War; Fort Ti.**
- 4-5 Oct: Stark's Muster; Fort #4, Charlestown, NH.**
- 18-19 Oct: Battle of the Hook; Gloucester, VA.**

### **Next**

- 17-18 May: Daniel Boone Homestead; Birdsboro, PA.**

Both the CL and BB voted to support this as a national event so it will be one of the largest events of the year. Since only a couple folks showed any interest at all, I'm not going into any detail. If interested, such info can be found at <http://www.battlesatboone.com/index.html>.

- 24-25 May: Military Timeline; Plattsburgh, NY.**

Being organized, at least in part, by our own Josh Wingler, the event covers from 1609 to the present. If interested, let me know and I'll send you the registration form. Details can be had by contacting Josh.

- 30 May-1 Jun: War in Schohary; Blenheim, NY.**

The 2d Albany and one of our frequent targets, the Select Marksmen, have teamed up to put together the third version of this event. It is being held at Lansing Manor, the NY Power Authority Visitor Center, in Blenheim, NY. They are trying to provide more civilian activities so there will be a non-denominational period laundry on Sat. and a period cricket match on Sun. Sat. eve. will feature a period dance. For those who want to burn extra powder, there will be wargames in addition to tactical demos commemorating the May, 1778, Cobleskill raid.

Directions: From Albany, take the NY Thruway to Exit 25A (I-88; Binghamton – Schenectady). After paying the toll, follow I-88 west to Exit 23 (Rt. 30A/30; Schoharie – Central Bridge). Take 30A south – it becomes Rt. 30 – through Schoharie and Middleburgh. The Visitors Center is on Rt. 30, 17 miles south of Middleburgh. It sits quite a ways back from the left side of the road so pay attention.

- 6-8 Jun: W. Boyleston, MA.**

The town is celebrating its bicentennial with a reenactment and the Good Guys (that's us) will camp of the grounds of the Historical Society. Busses will be provided to take us to Camp

Woodhaven for the tacticals and a ham and bean supper for us will happen Sat. night. Let me know if you want further details.

**6-8 Jun: Johnson Hall Market Fair, Johnstown, NY.**

Sutlers galore with entertainment into the evening.

**14-15 Jun: Pirate Festival; LCMM.**

The latest version of what has become an annual Kid's Pirate Festival. Go nuts dressing as a distressing pirate and talk funny.

**21-22 Jun: VT History Expo; Tunbridge, VT.**

Some of us will, for the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> time, set up for two days of talking history with, literally, thousands of visitors. Several buildings and tents with all sorts of displays and presentations.

Let me know if you are going to attend and how many will be with you – they usually send me passes.

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## JIM'S JAWINGS

Here we are at the beginning of another campaign season. There is the possibility of some new and interesting events this year along with the annual standards. I know with all of the other things going on in our lives, and the ever increasing fuel prices, that making time for and putting resources toward a "hobby" is getting harder all the time. Now, keeping in mind that this is coming from someone who considers what we do more of an avocation than a hobby, and one who has been accused of not having a "life", I'd like to ask you to consider a few things that we can discuss when we get together. I see this, or any unit as a team. That means commitment to the games, but unlike a sports series, all of the players don't have to be at all of the games. But, the more the merrier, and the more effective. Maybe it's because I missed a lot of last year, but sometimes I feel that we've settled into a comfortable, coasting attitude. I'd like to see us get together a few times during the winter for drills and activities that would improve our presentation and performance at events. I really want us to make sure that our first meeting of the year to consider our calendar is early enough to get returns to event organizers. I'd also like to put out a challenge. I would challenge each of you, individually, to develop one, just one new thing that would improve your, or the units impression. It could be a piece of kit, something that we do, an historical fact that we can use, anything. If we all could do that, individually and collectively, we could grow and, may I add, probably have more fun. Me, I'm hoping for cold rain and smallpox.

I hope to see many of you at Ti.

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## ELECTIONS

Following are the folks nominated for the various elected posts. We will take nominations from the floor ground and vote on them at the Ti gathering.

Lieut. Jim

Serjt. Bruce  
Corp. Jeff  
Board Austin  
Mike  
Maria  
Pam

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## CLEAN UP YOUR ACT

As a bit of direction to meet Jim's challenge to improve something in your impression, I offer up the following selection of things for the men to do just that. It comes from *The Hive Online*, <http://www.thehiveonline.org/index.htm> and is geared towards a civilian impression but still is very applicable to our portrayal. Ideas for women next time.

1. Use a neck cloth
2. Forget about those horizontally striped stockings - there's no documentation for them
3. Remove any medals or unit pins from your hat or coat
4. Cover your buttons with fabric
5. Save the haversack for military interpretations & use a market wallet or snap sack to carry your things. You can also put things in your coat pockets - that's what they're there for! - Another reason to wear a coat or jacket!!
6. Lose the accessories in the hat - one or two folks might have stuck a pipe in their hat, but there are far too many out there
7. Remove the ostrich feathers from your hat unless you are doing an upper class interpretation
8. Overcast your machine made button holes with hand stitches
9. Use farmer's Half Boots made from black wool to hide inaccurate shoes.
10. Use a razor! Beards were not fashionable in the 18th century. If you can't part with that beard that you've had since high school, consider trimming it to the stubble stage -- it will grow back!
11. While you have the razor out, consider trimming your sideburns.
12. Consider making a checked linen shirt, or unbleached linen shirt instead of a plain white one when interpreting the lower sort - and save the ruffles for an upper class impression
13. Feeling prosperous? Have your waistcoats fitted to the point of being snug all around. This garment should serve to provide shape & support for men of middling & upper classes. If you are concerned about too tight a waistcoat, consider opening the back seam and installing linen tape ties or eyelets with stay lacing cord (they are laced up like a pair of stays, and are eyeletted accordingly)
14. Tailor your breeches they should fit well thru the leg and not be too long
15. Consider a queue (\$25-\$30)
16. Try contacts or period frames (for those who wear glasses)
17. Use period documentation for developing and honing your impression

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## TWIRLING THE DISTAFF

Part the 2<sup>th</sup> of the article on wet-nursing begun last issue.

In an effort to combat a perceived drop in population and an actual increase in infant mortality, Enlightenment philosophers and physicians critiqued wet-nursing and encouraged mothers to rear their children at home. Rousseau's celebrated story of an orphan, *Emile*, first published in 1762, was perhaps the most popular and persuasive means of explicating Enlightenment attitudes concerning family values and the upbringing of children. At the very beginning the book makes the connection between breast-feeding and proper education: "The earliest education is the most important and it undoubtedly is woman's work. If the author of nature had meant to assign it to men he would have given them milk to feed the child." The frontispiece to an early edition, showing a buxom, barefoot wet nurse in the countryside, breast-feeding one child while changing the clothing of another, is inscribed: "The education of man begins at his birth." Although a child's natural mother was the ideal candidate for instilling early education, Rousseau claimed that a healthy wet nurse was preferable to a mother who had no real interest in her child.

Those who decided to hire a wet nurse could turn for advice in choosing one to Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres* (1751-77), which was promoted as "the work of a large group of men of letters, experts, and specialists, who have set themselves the task of assembling and condensing all, or virtually all, human knowledge." The qualities of a satisfactory wet nurse are listed in the article "Nurse." Her age, the length of time she had been Nursing, the color of her breast milk, hair color, weight, size and shape of her breasts and nipples, and diet were some of the many things to be considered when choosing a mercenary nurse. Red hair, freckles, pimples, and rotten teeth were among the many attributes to be avoided. But even with such guidelines, more often wet nurses were chosen nearly at random. Parents could find their own nurse or work with a *meneur*, whose job it was to connect nurses with prospective clients. Most parents sent their child into the country to live with the nurse, as we see in *Farewell to the Wet Nurse*, although some nurses came to live with families in the city. Many parents did not see the nursing child for as long as four years. However, images such as Fragonard's wash drawing *Visit to the Nurse* and Aubry's *First Lesson of Fraternal Friendship* depict parents visiting their offspring at the nurse's home. In both cases, older siblings accompany the parents for the purpose of strengthening family ties. *The Beautiful Nurse*, engraved by Joseph de Longueil after Charles Eisen, is unusual in showing a wet nurse and her husband bringing the child for a visit to the parental home. While Eisen and Aubry depict the prominently placed wet nurse holding the child as it interacts with its family, only Fragonard shows the child being embraced by its natural father. The wet nurse, although leaning in with interest, is relegated to the shadows.

The option of a good wet nurse was not without its own dangers, however. Parents were warned that their child's affections would be transferred to the wet nurse and that this love would be reciprocated. Rousseau admonished his readers: "And this affection when developed has its drawbacks, which should make every sensible woman afraid to put her

child out to nurse. Is she prepared to divide her mother's rights, or rather to abdicate them in favour of a stranger; to see her child loving another more than herself; to feel that the affection he retains for his own mother is a favour, while his love for his foster-mother is a duty; for is not some affection due where there has been a mother's care?" Just such an occurrence takes place in the companion paintings *First Lesson of Fraternal Friendship* and *Farewell to the Wet Nurse*.

Despite the brisk business of wet-nursing, Enlightenment thinking about the utility of maternal breast-feeding reached to social strata below the aristocracy. Even lower-class mothers who contributed financially to the family's income were urged to nurse their own children. Etienne Voysard's engraving after Antoine Borel, *The encouragement of Maternal Nursing*, speaks to that campaign. Institutes were established to provide mothers with financial assistance so they did not have to return to work immediately after giving birth. In a political move meant to help his reputation, the dramatist Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais donated proceeds from *The Marriage of Figaro* to the founding of such an institution in Lyon. In the Voysard print we see Figaro dispensing money to nursing mothers. In the background, fathers are released from prison, to which they were sent for failure to pay their wet-nursing bills. The campaign to encourage maternal nursing even led to the "updating" of A. Solario's Renaissance image of the Virgin and Child, merely by changing the title to *The First Duty of Mothers*. This new title most likely was inspired by the entry for "Mother" in the *Encyclopédie*: "The mother's first duty is to nurse her children."

Unlike the religious matter of *The First Duty of Mothers*, most eighteenth-century French images of breast-feeding are everyday scenes of well-to-do mothers. This implies a desire on the part of the art-buying public to own works of art that reflected the century's vogue for maternal nursing rather than the realities of the continued employment of wet nurses. Not strictly limited to paintings and prints, nursing mothers appear in contemporary fashion books and as both a Sèvres porcelain group and painted decoration on porcelain. These applied arts, which demonstrate a market for contemporary interest in this subject matter, were targeted for an aristocratic audience, at whom the propaganda for maternal nursing was aimed.

Nursing children with animals' milk was sometimes seen as preferable to using a mercenary nurse, and this practice also appears in popular imagery. Augustin Le Grand's engraving after Jean-Frédéric Schall's *Geneviève des Bois, Comtesse des Brabant*, illustrates a scene from a popular novel. The countess's child nurses from a doe, while the animal's offspring licks the human child's feet. Another exotic treatment of the subject is François-Robert Ingouf's engraving after Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier, *Canadians at the Tomb of Their Child*. The title and subject were taken from the text of the abbé Raynal's *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (Geneva, 1781). A Canadian Native American squirts breast milk onto the tomb of her child whom she buried six months previously. The child's father leans of the tomb, his head hung in despair. Native Americans were considered to be closer to nature than "civilized" eighteenth-century French citizens. Absolutely devoted and attached to their children, whom they nursed themselves, animal nurses and Native American mothers were meant to inspire eighteenth-century French mothers to return to their "natural" role.

In spite of the fact that children of all classes were breast-fed by mercenary nurses during this period, images of the "unnatural" practice of wet-nursing are rare. Positively identified renderings of wet nurses do not reflect contemporary criticisms of their abilities. Instead, they

tend to show families visiting the child at the nurse's, making certain she or he is well cared for, and developing and maintaining family ties. Although between the publication of *Emile* and the end of the Revolution maternal nursing enjoyed a brief vogue among the wealthiest classes, the fashion for maternal nursing continues to come and go to the present with changing taste and medical opinion. The number of images of mothers breast-feeding as compared to the number of depictions of wet nurses might lead viewers to the misconception that maternal nursing was the norm. On the contrary, the profusion of these works of art were meant to help fulfill the unrealized goal of making this myth a reality.

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## RANGERS

Sit up straight, put the toys away, and swallow your gum because today, children, we are going to talk about Abner Barlow, one of the more interesting stories of the original Rangers. Most of the following comes from his pension application and the amount of detail has always made me wonder if he kept a diary during his service.

Abner arrived on this earth in April, 1757, in Stratford, CT. He moved with his father to Stratford, NH, in 1772 and, in July, 1776, enlisted in a militia co. made up of men from several towns in the Co'os region. He enlisted in Aldrich's Co. on Dec. 30, 1776 and, according to Whitcomb, "was one of my best soldiers." In March of 1777, he marched to Ti on snow shoes but soon received a furlough to go home "on account of fever & ague" where he remained for several months. It is possible he marched with Stark from #4 in August as he says he took part in the battle at Bennington and had rejoined Whitcomb's in time to be at the surrender of Burgoyne.

In March of '78, the unit marched to Rutland where they went out on patrols of 8-12 men generally under serjeant Lerner but occasionally under Danforth. On Christmas day of that year, Barlow and some other Rangers left Rutland for Haverhill, NH, and almost perished from the cold and hunger. In Haverhill, the old court house served as their headquarters and barracks and they drew rations, hay, and arms "from Government." They exercised (drilled) some but mostly scouted under Danforth, Rosebrooks, and another man whose name is illegible. While on one of these missions in Oct., 1780, looking for Indians heard to be in the area towards Champlain, 14 Indians captured Barlow and a "hunter named Gibson" (a short-term member of Whitcomb's) about 20 miles from the mouth of the Onion River. This party probably came from the force that raided the Royalton area and, indeed, the two prisoners met up with 5-600 more Indians 2-3 miles down river. Barlow says that the Indians switched shirts with them and were "very dirty and lousy." During the couple weeks it took to get back to Canada, the prisoners were "fed on food that the Indians' dogs would hardly eat." Barlow would eventually be held in Canada until the summer of 1783.

There is one little twist to Barlow's story, however. In the spring of 1781, a party of Brit rangers captured Col. Thomas Johnson at the home of Deacon Elkins in Peacham, VT. In his journal, Johnson wrote, "To my great surprise, I found John Gibson and Barlow of the company [of capturers]." Several years later, when the pension board found out about the possible treason, they suspended Barlow's payments. However, it appears that he and Gibson functioned as unwilling participants as the board eventually restored the pension to Barlow's

widow, Eunice French (who happened to be the sister of another Ranger, Hains French). There is also a Brit report that says Barlow and Gibson did not go into the village but, rather, remained in the woods with a number of Brit guards.

Following the war, the Barlow's lived in NH, NY, and PA and eventually made their way to Wisconsin with their son and his family. Abner died on June 4, 1836, and is buried in Pleasant Prairie near Kenosha. His ancestors have used his service to gain recognition in both the Sons of the American Revolution and the Daughters of the American Revolution.

**Quando Omni Flunkus Moritati  
Carpe Potus**



Michael Barbieri  
662 Creek Rd.  
Wallingford, Republic of Vermont 05773



# *Benjamin Whitcomb's Independent Corps of Rangers*

A non-profit corporation established in 1975 to re-create the life style of the Rangers in the War of Independence, 1776-1781.

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