MAJOR GENERAL JOHN STARK

Hero of

Bunker Hill & Bennington

1728 - 1822

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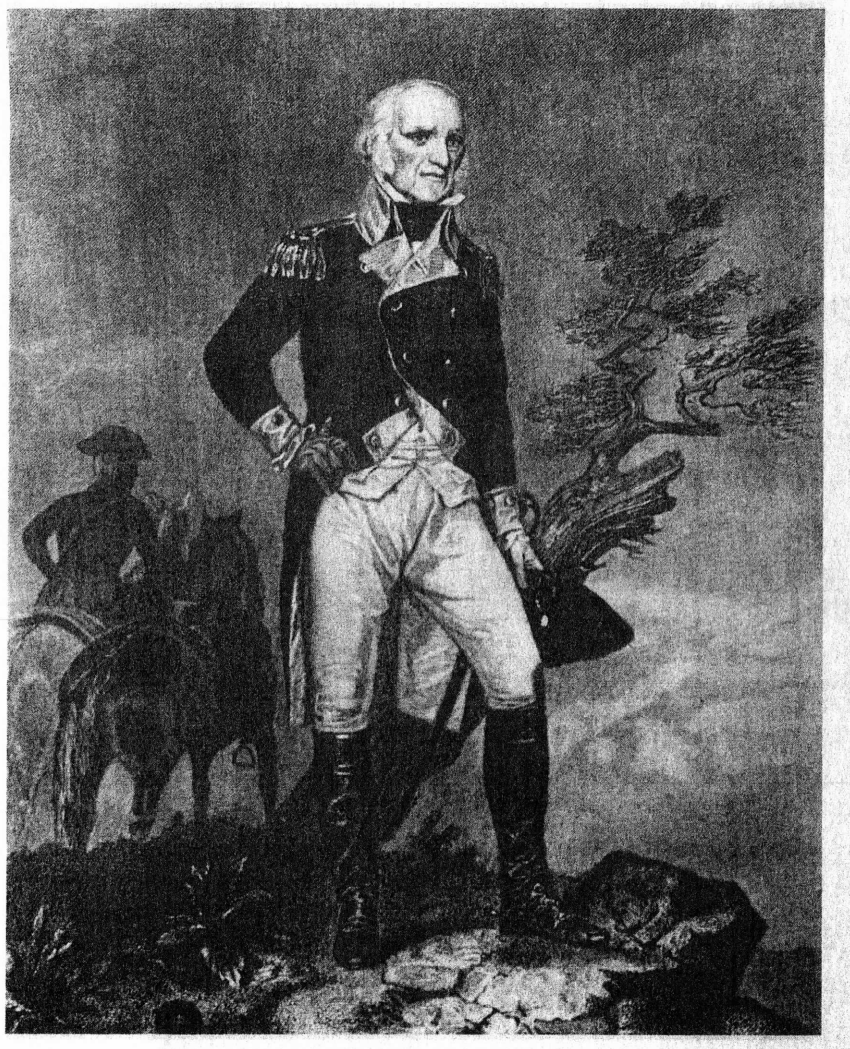
This condensed story of the exploits of Gen. John Stark is by Leon W. Anderson, Legislative Historian, for the second in a series of historic bottles by Jim Beam Distillers. The help of the Rt. Rev. Robert M. Hatch and Dr. J. Duane Squires is gratefully acknowledged.



This is from an engraving taken from the original painting by Alonzo Chappel, published by Johnson Fry and Co. in 1862, showing General Stark in full uniform. Courtesy N. H. Historical Society.

New Hampshire still owes homage to General John Stark, her hero of the Revolutionary War of two centuries ago.

Historians have also failed to yield just due to this unlettered farm boy who grew into manhood fighting Indians.

It was John Stark, fresh from his Derryfield sawmill, who sparked American valor at Bunker Hill which forced the British to evacuate Boston. But you'd never know this from visiting historic Bunker Hill monument.

It was John Stark who won the Battle of Bennington and spiked Burgoyne's march from Canada to New York to break the colonies. But a site for a statue of Stark, fronting the gallant Bennington monument, remains vacant because New Hampshire has failed to fill it.

This is not to suggest that General John Stark has been entirely forgotten. There are statues in his honor in the State House yard at Concord, in Stark Park at Manchester, and in Statuary Hall at Washington.

But for all too long, the deeds and darings of this fearless New Hampshireman, who shunned fame and flattery, have remained dimmed in the annals of time.

* * *

There's but one real Stark biography, although Grandson Caleb Stark published "memoirs" of the General in 1831 and again in 1860. It was produced in 1949 by Howard Parker Moore of New York City and Laconia under most unusual circumstances.

Moore was then a septuagenarian and retired insurance executive of modest means. He had become enamored of Stark years earlier while compiling the Moore genealogy, which is sprinkled through the annals of Canterbury and Loudon. He packed seven years of dedicated research into an 800-page volume, and then because Stark was so little known could not find a publisher who considered it worth printing.

Undaunted, Moore mustered $2,500 from his own limited resources, hacked his compilation to 539 pages, and thus financed a meager edition of 500 copies. But adversity continued. Editors declined to review it, citing lack of appeal.

Moore's file at the New Hampshire Historical Society says that only the *Manchester Union Leader* and the *Times-Union* of Albany, N. Y., (where he long resided) paid tribute to the book, along with Professor Ralph Adams Brown of State Teachers College at Cortland, N. Y.

So Moore personally labored to distribute his monument to the grandeur and glory of General John Stark. He solicited the tiny chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution, at $4.25 per copy, and quite a few landed on their off-beat shelves.

Howard P. Moore

A few libraries and historical societies, especially in New Hampshire, purchased copies. But for the most part, Moore's Stark has already become a collector's item and unobtainable at any price.

Moore's story of Stark lacks popular appeal. It is admittedly poorly written. The author himself said:

> You will find it packed full of facts, so full that in my forced condensation, literary excellence was difficult.
>
> I am not in fear that anyone coming after will dig up so much. It was too hard work. One presentation is enough.
>
> New interpretations will, or will not, give me credit — and that won't matter either.

New Hampshire librarians have joined with Dr. J. Duane Squires of New London, top Granite State historian, in lauding Moore's labor of love. They freely agree its authenticity has given unquestioned stature to John Stark's leadership and daring at Bunker Hill and Bennington, and elsewhere in the eight-year struggle for American freedoms.

New Hampshire truly owes lasting gratitude to Howard Parker Moore, son of George Franklin Moore of Loudon, who died at 86 in 1954, and lies in Laconia's Bayside Cemetery with his father. His story of Stark will perpetuate the valor of this valiant Granite Stater longer than all else. So this modest pamphlet is dedicated to Moore's memory, for he, more than anyone, has given John Stark his just due.

* * *

John Stark had a most unusual life, and origin as well.

His parents were youthful Archibald and Eleanor Stark of the Scotch-Irish settlement in northern Ireland who came to New Hampshire 250 years ago seeking freedom and fortune. They were part of a shipload of pioneers which became scourged by small-pox and was barred from a Boston landing in the autumn of 1720.

The death-ridden vessel was forced to make haven in the wilds of Maine, at Sheepscott, near Wiscasset. So it was not until the following year that the unhappy Stark couple, whose three children had died at sea, finally arrived at Nutfield — now Londonderry — where Eleanor's father, James Nichols, had settled two years earlier. In the ensuing 14 years, they had seven more children, including John Stark, the fifth, born on August 28, 1728.

Archibald was a "joiner", as carpenters then were called. But he turned to farming. When John was eight the family home burned. It was then that the Starks moved to Harrytown, later Derryfield and then Manchester, and built a small home beside Amoskeag Falls.

Biographer Moore says John Stark became a man without schooling. And while his father had some education, his mother could not even read nor write. It was thus that the Stark youngsters grew up on their 600-acre wilderness, overlooking the Merrimack river, part of which for a century has been the State Industrial School.

John Stark and his brothers soon became hunters and trappers, and Indian fighters to retain their scalps.

When 23, he was captured by Indians while hunting on the Baker river in Rumney. Grandson Caleb Stark relates the episode in his 1831 Memoirs as follows:

> At that time, in company with his brother William and David Stinson and Amos Eastman, he went upon a hunting expedition to Baker's river, in Rumney, N. H.

On the 28th of April they were surprised by a scout of ten St. Francis Indians. Signs of them had been discovered two days before and the party were in consequence about leaving the hunting ground.

John separated from his companions to collect the traps — and while thus engaged fell into the hands of the enemy. On being interrogated respecting his comrades he pointed a contrary direction and led them two miles out of the way.

His friends, alarmed at his long absence, fired several guns, which discovered them to the savages, who, proceeding some distance down the river, turned their encampment into an ambush to intercept their boat.

The hunters, suspecting what had taken place, were proceeding down the river — William Stark and Stinson in the canoe, and Eastman on the bank; when, about sunrise the latter fell into the ambush, and was taken by the savages, who then directed John to hail the others. He did so; informed his friends of the situation and advised an escape to the opposite shore — upon which four of the Indians fired into the boat.

At this critical moment, John had the temerity to strike up two of their muskets, and upon the others preparing to fire, did the same and told William to escape, as they had fired all their guns. He profited by the advice and made good his retreat — Stinson, his companion, was killed.

The Indians reportedly severely beat John Stark for his daring and took his furs before heading north to the friendly French in Canada. They reached St. Francis on June 9, after which, Grandson Caleb wrote:

When Eastman and Stark arrived at St. Francis, they were compelled to undergo the ceremony of running the gauntlet. The young men of the village ranged themselves in two lines, each armed with a rod, to strike the captives as they passed along.

Eastman was severely whipped; but Stark, thinking one good turn deserved another, snatched a club and made his way through the lines knocking the Indians down, right and left, whenever they came within his reach; and escaped with scarcely a blow, to the great delight of the old men, who sat at a distance enjoying the sport at their young men's expense.

There have been printed variations. One tells that Stark was put to a hoe and after tilling only weeds, tossed it away, saying only squaws were fit for gardening, and this pleased the braves so much they dubbed him "young chief."

In August, two Massachusetts officials bent upon ransoming their own people at St. Francis, found none. So they were supposed to have paid $103 for Stark and $60 for Eastman, with the understanding they would be reimbursed. Stark trapped the following winter for his freedom fee.

Legend says that in later years, John Stark liked to recall this ransom, suggesting it was proof he was worth at least $103!

But Moore's research disclosed different details. Reverend J. D. Butler told the Vermont Legislature in 1849 the ransom

was not for $103 but for a pony. I copied the following from the original journal of the officer who redeemed the captive — "July 1. This day was John Stark brought to Montreal by his Indian master. He was taken a hunting this spring. He is given up for an Indian pony for which we paid 515 livres".

In retrospect, 515 livres or $103 colonial dollars measured exactly the same in value.

* * *

John Stark became a professional Indian fighter after paying off his 1752 ransom. He served the British for seven years, mostly in Rogers' Rangers, led by his Dunbarton friend, Robert Rogers, and rose to rank of Captain while absorbing military experience.

Biographer Moore devotes 65 pages to this important phase of John Stark's life. He sums it:

Stark had learned the hard way all the complicated business of armies, in the field, in the camp, in battle, in victory and defeat.

The "Old French War" taught him how to apply discipline and not too much of it. He became well grounded in military maneuvers. He saw how large bodies of soldiers should be handled, supplied with equipment and provender.

Naturally a keen observer he had also the faculty of learning his lessons well. Eventually he had no superior in knowing how his countrymen would act.

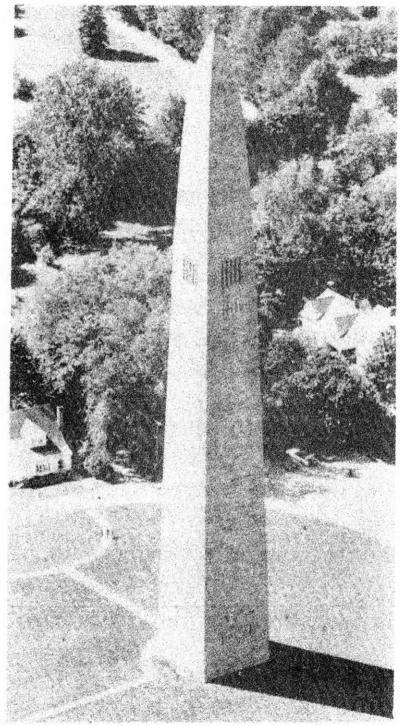
The complement of this was that his own men knew almost instinctively how he would act. This mutual understanding was the basis of the confidence the enlisted men and their junior officers always bore evidence of.

* * *

John Stark's father died on June 25, 1758, at 61, while his son served at Ticonderoga with a huge British army as it was soundly thrashed by the French. Learning it a month later, Stark furloughed home and married Elizabeth Page of Starkstown (Dunbarton). She was daughter of Captain Caleb Page and the two families had long been friends.

John Stark took his beloved "Molly" as his 20-year-old bride on August 20, eight days prior to his 30th birthday. Then he shortly returned to war and their first of 11 children was born in December of the following year, at the Page home and named Caleb Stark.

Two years later John Stark and his wife moved into the home of his widowed mother beside Amoskeag Falls, while son Caleb remained at the Page home where he grew to manhood. Stark became a farmer and also devoted much time to a sawmill on the Merrimack.



Bennington monument was dedicated in 1891. It stands 306 feet tall, of New York limestone and has a modern elevator.

Eight years later he built a mansion-like residence up the river where he and Molly reared their large family and were eventually buried in their own nearby lot. This home became part of the State Industrial School in 1858 and was burned by inmates just before Christmas in 1865.

Never one to promote himself or curry favor, dour John Stark yet became a leader in tiny Derryfield, which still had but 12 voters in 1775.

When the New Hampshire colony was divided into counties in 1771, Stark was a first town Grand Juror to serve at Amherst, then seat of Hillsborough County. He also served in the secret sessions of the illegal Committee of Safety at Exeter in July of 1774, and at county-level anti-British meetings in Amherst early in 1775.

Stark was at his sawmill when word arrived of the immortal battles of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775. He dropped everything, so to speak, and rushed by horse to the scene with all his worth. So did some 1,000 other New Hampshiremen. They met at Medford and unanimously merged into a regiment under Captain John Stark, with rank of Colonel.

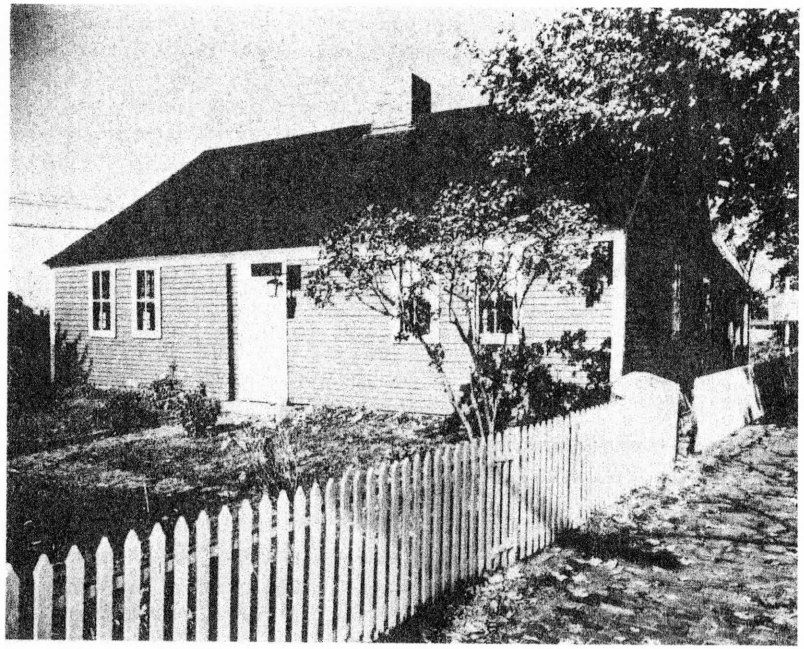
Stark's regiment with that of Colonel James Reed of Fitzwilliam, was stationed on Winter Hill, the extreme north of the encirclement of some 7,600 American citizen soldiers, most of them without uniforms, when the historic June 17 Battle of Bunker Hill unfolded.

The battle was triggered the night before as Colonel William Prescott of Pepperell, Mass., with 1,000 men dug a fortification on Breed's Hill in Charlestown, by mixup of an original order to fortify Bunker Hill, a mile to the rear. At dawn, the British launched a sustained bombardment, by noon most of Prescott's soldiers (including some 200 from Connecticut) had dwindled to less than 500, as the others, with their picks and shovels, were ordered back to reinforce Bunker Hill.

In mid-morning, Massachusetts officials asked Stark to send 200 men to Prescott's succor, only four miles away. About noon he climbed Bunker Hill to scan developments, as British bombardment continued.

Stark noted imminent danger. He saw that Prescott could be flanked from the north, along the Mystic river.

There's no record that Stark was told to act further. But Biographer Moore offers the details, all beyond dispute. Stark at once marched his entire force, including Reed's regiment, to the front.



Shown is the 1736 Stark home in which the General grew to manhood. This Manchester building has been relocated and is owned and supervised by Molly Stark (DAR) Chapter.

They strode, straight and sturdy, through milling and aimless other soldiery, who failed to dare the enemy gunfire upon a narrow peninsula to reach the beleagured Prescott.

The New Hampshiremen immediately threw up a rail fence from the hill-top down to the river. It was there, during the 90-minute battle from 3 to 4:30 p.m. that the 1,000 Granite Staters twice stopped and routed the supposedly invincible British military might, and kindled the fervor for freedoms, never again to be quenched.

It was only in a third assault, when the British attack shifted upon the makeshift fort, by then down to a scant 150 men, that the Americans, their bullet-pouches near empty, capitulated and retreated to the safety of Bunker Hill and its new entrenchments.

Massachusetts historians failed down through the years to chronicle the valor of Stark and his New Hampshiremen. They have stressed the 7,600 Americans at the scene. But as Moore points out, New Hampshire has vainly insisted there were only about 1,600 men in the actual battle, of which upwards of 1,200 were New Hampshiremen, some fighting in Bay State units beside the redoubt.

* * *

Rare tribute to Stark and his men is expressed by Thomas J. Fleming in his colorful 1960 story of Bunker Hill, entitled "Now We Are Enemies" (St. Martin's Press of New York). He says Stark's prowess featured the battle, as contradictions between Colonel Putnam of Connecticut and General Ward of Massachusetts led to a welter of confusion in the hectic hours of that memorable day.

Fleming stresses:

> Only in the New Hampshire camp were the orders clearly understood and rapidly executed.
>
> But here there was another delay. Upon the first order to send 200 men forward, Colonel John Stark immediately decided to prepare the entire regiment for a fight.
>
> Strange as it may seem, these 1,200 men who were guarding the left flank of the American army were almost entirely devoid of ammunition. New Hampshire, a frontier province, was short of cash, compared to the more established and prosperous communities of Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts.
>
> Soon after they arrived in camp, Stark was writing home to report that many of his men were without blankets or provisions, and more than a few lacked guns. Most of the men from the other colonies brought a personal supply of powder and ammunition with them. New Hampshire supplies were lean here, too.
>
> Quickly Stark rushed a detachment to headquarters, and they brought back lead and powder. The lead came from the Cambridge Episcopal Church's organ, which the American dissenters had melted down a few weeks ago. Each man was issued a gill of powder and molds to make bullets. The molds proved useless, because their guns were of a wild variety of calibers. They had to pound the bullets by hand to make them fit their highly individual weapons.
>
> If they were poorly equipped, these New Hampshiremen more than made up for it in enthusiasm and fighting know-how. Their commander, lean, taciturn John Stark, had a reputation as a soldier second only to Israel Putnam . . .

Here is General Stark in full battle action in Stark Park at Manchester. His home community erected this statute in 1948.

The uniformless soldiers Stark and McClary (an aide from Epsom who was killed in the battle) led were, man for man, the best troops in the amorphous American army. For the other New England colonies, the frontier was relatively remote and there was little or no excuse to use the gun, especially in self-defense.

> In New Hampshire, the frontier began at the end of the yard and the woods were still full of game. Stark's men were much more used to handling guns than the majority of the Grand American Army. They were also considerably tougher.

* * *

Colonel Hibbard Richter of Brookline, Mass., lawyer and five-term Massachusetts legislator, has long championed Stark and New Hampshire's leadership at Bunker Hill.

Richter, of early Granite State lineage and now practicing in Concord, N. H., told the Boston SAR Chapter in 1952 that Stark had ever been denied just recognition in the dozens of volumes produced on Bunker Hill. He put it bluntly:

> The suppression of facts and undue exaltation of subordinate parties have perverted the record in the interests of persons and states to whom and to which chief honors belong; but the reiteration of assertations which in their origin have no reliable authority, however decorated by pomp and pageantry and the eloquence of eulogy, cannot permanently escape the scrutiny of impartial history.

Bunker Hill cost the British 226 killed and 828 wounded. The Americans lost 140 killed, 271 wounded and 30 captured.

Colonel Richter told the Bunker Hill Monument Association in 1954:

> This was the bloodiest battle of the Revolution and the bloodiest battle on the American continent until the Civil War, except for Jackson's repulse of Pakenham at New Orleans in 1815.

Stark personally staked his beach fence front at 210 feet and warned his men not to fire until the British reached that point. Enemy casualties totalled 465 there and Stark later said the dead "lay as thick as sheep in a fold."

* * *

Within two years, Colonel Stark quit the war and returned home. He had become filled with bitterness by repeated promotions over his rank of other New Hampshiremen of less military stature but more political prestige.

Here is Mrs. Elizabeth "Molly" Stark, from a portrait by the famous John S. Copley, presumably before she was 36 by which time she had already borne eight of her 11 children. By courtesy Ehrich Galleries of New York City, and the N. H. Historical Society.

On March 22, 1777, Stark personally presented the following single-sentence resignation to the Legislature at Exeter:

> Ever since Hostilities commenced, I have as far as in me lay Endeavored to prevent my country from being ravaged and Enslaved by our cruel and unnatural enemies, have undergone the Hardships and Fatigues of two campaigns with cheerfulness and alacrity, ever enjoying the pleasing satisfaction that I was doing my God and Country the Greatest service my abilities would admit of & it was with the utmost Gratitude that I accepted the important command which this State appointed me, I should have served with the greatest pleasure; more especially at this important crisis when our Country calls for the utmost Exertions of every American, but am exteremely grieved that I am bound on Honour to leave the service, Congress having tho't fit to promote Junr officers over my head; so that lest I should show myself unworthy of the Honour conferred on me & a want of that Spirit which ought to glow in the Breast of Every officer appointed by this Honble House, in not suitably resenting an Indignity, I must (though grieved to leave the service of my Country) beg leave to resign my Commission hoping that you will make a choice of some Gentleman who may Honour the Cause & his Country, to succeed.

The Legislature accepted the resignation, voted thanks for Stark's long service and he glumly returned to his Derryfield home, rusty sawmill and neglected farm.

But the indignant retirement was not for long. The surprising American setback at Ticonderoga shocked New Hampshire as details sifted back. Then came Vermont appeals for help as General John Burgoyne launched his drive from Canada up Lake Champlain toward the Hudson river to Albany, to meet General Howe from New York City and cut the rebellious colonies in two, and to their doom.

History has recorded as of July 18:

> When the news of the fall of Ticonderoga reached Exeter where the Legislature was then in session, John Langdon, the Speaker, seeing the public credit exhausted and his compatriots discouraged, rose and said:
>
> "I have a thousand dollars in hard money; I will pledge my plate for three thousand more. I have 70 hogsheads of Tobago rum which will be sold for the most they will bring "They are at the service of the state. If we succeed in de-

fending our firesides and our homes I may be remunerated, if we do not then the property will be of no value to me. Our friend, John Stark, who so nobly maintained the honor of our state at Bunker Hill, may safely be entrusted with the honor of the enterprise and we will check the progress of Burgoyne."

* * *

The spark of Langdon's spunk spread like wildfire. A messenger was dispatched to Stark for his leadership and he promptly rode to Exeter to accept the challenge. The courage of his fellow citizens followed suit.

Bouton's history of Concord gives the following inspiring example:

As soon as it was decided to raise volunteer companies and place them under the command of General Stark, Colonel Gordon Hutchins (member of the Assembly from Concord) mounted his horse and travelled all night, with all possible haste, to reach Concord on the Sabbath afternoon before the close of the public service.

Dismounting at the meeting house door, he walked up the aisle of the old North Church while Mr. (Reverend Timothy) Walker was preaching.

Mr. Walker paused in his sermon and said "Col. Hutchins, are you the bearer of any message?"

"Yes," replied the Colonel. "General Burgoyne with his army is on the march to Albany. General Stark has been offered to take command of the New Hampshire men and if we all turn out we can cut off Burgoyne's march."

Whereupon Rev. Mr. Walker said "My hearers, those of you who are willing to go had better leave at once." At which all the men in the meeting house rose and went out; many immediately enlisting. The whole night was spent in preparation and a company was ready to march the next day.

Phineas Eastman said "I can't go for I have no shoes" to which Samuel Thompson, a shoe-maker, replied "Don't be troubled about that, for you shall have a pair before morning"; which was done. The late Jonathan Eastman, Sen. Esq. was in similar want of shoes and a new pair was made for him before morning.

* * *

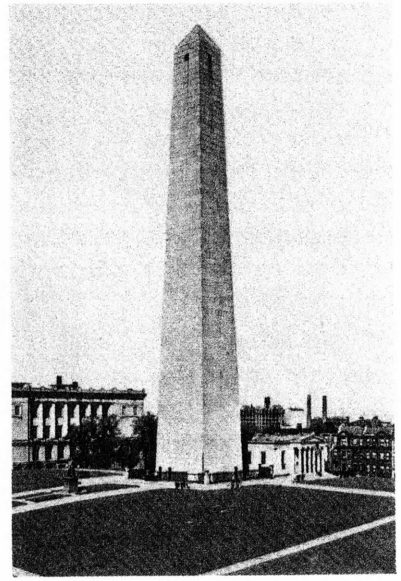
The Legislature gave Stark the overdue rank of Brigadier General and the volunteer citizen soldiers were offered a month's pay and travel allowance in advance, for the Vermont venture.

But Stark continued adamant. He insisted upon complete authority, with no controls from the Continental army or anyone else. The Legislature readily agreed to all his terms of determination.

Within a week Stark was in command of 1,400 men, including some 13 dozen of his Bunker Hill veterans. So off they hiked to Vermont, with an initial rendezvous at No. 4, (now Charlestown) on the Connecticut river border of the two states.

Vermont's Committee of Safety hailed the approach and pledged ample supplies, but no cooking kettles for they were all lost in the Ticonderoga debacle. Stark wrote home for kettles and rum. But both commodities were in such short supply he never received them, except for 25 kettles.

Stark's command marched into Bennington, on the other side of Vermont, early in August. He sensed its strategic importance, for the town had become a depot of military supplies.



Bunker Hill monument, dedicated in 1843, is of granite and 221 feet tall.

Officials of the American forces to the south, in the Albany area, tried to induce General Stark to join them for a united stand against the approaching Burgoyne. He declined as polite as possible, making plain the safety of Vermont was his sole objective, for otherwise New Hampshire would be open to attack.

Biographer Moore devotes 100 pages to the Bennington battle in the late afternoon of August 16, 1777, some 14 months following Bunker Hill.

This time Stark and his New Hampshiremen took the offensive and routed the enemy by nightfall. It shocked "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne and his well-equipped and highly trained 7,000 troops, many of them seasoned German mercenaries, into retreat and complete surrender seven weeks later at Saratoga. It also put the imprint of indelible greatness upon Stark's career.

General Stark, then 49, carefully planned both the place and time for the battle, which occurred on the New York side of the Vermont border, along the little Walloomsac river. His New Hampshire force, then at 1,300 was supported by handsome 34-year-old Colonel Seth Warner, Vermont's ranking military chief, with 300 men, along with 400 militia from the Berkshires in Massachusetts, who suddenly appeared and demanded opportunity to fight.

Shown here is the Stark statue in the State House yard. The eight-foot bronze figure rests on Concord granite.

The beginning was in the afternoon of August 14, when Stark sent Lt. Col. William Gregg of Londonderry with 200 men on a scout towards Cambridge, N. Y., where the appearance of 500 Indians was reported. Gregg soon ran into Colonel Baum and 500 of the enemy. Mostly Germans, they included Tories and Indian allies, sent by Burgoyne from his main camp a day's distance, to raid Bennington for army supplies, foodstuffs and horses.

Both sides were surprised, for the British did not know that Stark was in the area. Gregg discreetly retreated to Stark, who immediately advanced in full force and dared Baum to attack. Instead, Baum occupied a convenient hill-top, felled trees for entrenchments and messaged Burgoyne for help.

Upon determining the enemy's approximate strength, Stark planned a morning attack. But it rained heavily the next day and the following night. So General Stark bided his time. And Colonel Baum improved his defenses, as both sides skirmished in the downpour.

As the August 16 skies cleared a brilliant summer afternoon set in, with great heat and humidity, according to Moore. And Stark set and baited his trap.

Two American detachments were sent out to flank Baum from the north and south and flush him. Colonel Samuel Herrick of Vermont, an old Ranger, led one of the deploying units, while Colonel Moses Nichols of Amherst, N. H., headed the other.

As time was allowed for Herrick and Nichols to get into position for their surprise attacks, General Stark tricked the attention of Baum's force, by now probably wondering why help had not arrived. He marched columns of men around a slope in plain view of the enemy, and repeated the maneuver over and over again to give Baum the impression his force was greater than it actually was.

As Herrick and Nichols opened fire, Stark went into action. His troops readily chased the Tories and Indians from their positions along the river. Within two hours, the three-pronged offensive carried the hill as Baum and his Germans, riddled by death from the Americans' sharpshooter muskets, fled through the woods, and many voluntarily became prisoners.

* * *

As evening approached and the Americans pressed through the woodlands to capture more and more prisoners, a second British force of 500 suddenly appeared. It was Colonel Breymann with heavy cannon and equipment which had delayed his progress along rain-bogged roads and trails, too late to succor Baum.

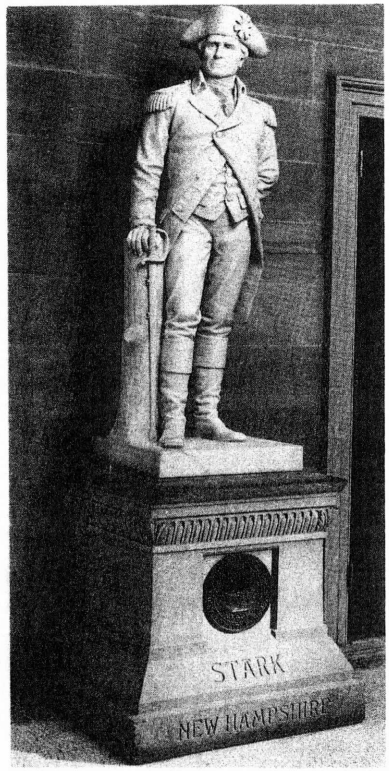
General Stark admittedly became startled and somewhat dismayed by this turn of events. But then some 75 of Colonel Warner's soldiers from nearby Manchester showed up, fresh and fit, and turned the tide. Sparked by their vim and vigor the battle-weary Americans turned to a second attack which soon also became a rout. Breymann's troops for some unknown reason ran out of ammunition and fled in

all directions into the gloaming. History records, however, that Breymann's men had become dog-tired from their day-and-night forced march, pulling heavy guns and wagons through mud, and lacked their customary fighting power.

Stark finally ordered his citizen soldiers out of action to save them from shooting each other in the oncoming darkness.

There was jubilation in the American ranks for there was considerable plunder and by custom such profit was later shared among the survivors. But Biographer Moore also wrote:

> The struggle had ended so late, the men were so scattered it was inevitable that they would have to spend the night in the open and where they could be grouped along the road and in the woods above it.



This is the Stark statute in Statuary Hall at Washington. Courtesy Senator Norris Cotton.

Water was near, spirituous liquor stimulated tired bodies, food was found and suppers cooked.

> The weary were soon to sleep the sleep of exhaustion near many in that last sleep that knows no waking. Hundreds had given their lives or were seriously injured fighting in those rugged hills.
>
> Comrades all, boyhood friends, neighbors, some brothers, they kept the watches of the night comforting the living victims of the combat. Many pitifully wounded and agonized by pain awaited without opiate or anodyne such relief as the times and the place afforded.
>
> The few surgeons went from one stricken man to another. Amputations were crudely and hurriedly done and heated iron seared the quivering flesh.

* * *

It was at Bennington that General Stark was said to have uttered his famous victory appeal to his troops. Biographer Moore conducted an exhaustive study of the subject because of multiple variations that have come down through history.

> Moore's considered opinion was:
> There are your enemies, the Red Coats and the Tories. We must beat them or tonight Molly Stark sleeps a widow.

Governor Hiland Hall of Vermont, a historian, sponsored another version for the granite boulder which marks Stark's camp site before the battle:

> There are the Red Coats, and they are ours or this night Molly Stark sleeps a widow.

* * *

While Stark rose to immortality at Bennington, he was for the moment being criticized and censured.

Three days after the victory, the Continental Congress at Philadelphia scolded New Hampshire, said Stark was insubordinate, and insisted that the General immediately submit to Continental army supervision.

For their own good reasons, New Hampshire officials had failed to tell the Congress about Stark's going to Vermont, let alone his independency of action. The Congress learned of it only by chance, as it received a letter from General Lincoln in the Albany area complaining that Stark had refused to obey his command to join him. It was this information that sparked the summary censure on August 19, several more days having yet to elapse before the victory news arrived.

Even on August 18, two days following the victory, Delegate James Lovell of Massachusetts wrote from Philadelphia to his friend, William Whipple, in New Hampshire:

> In the name of the Union what orders have you given Stark? He had better have tarried at home than to march

This is a copy of the only portrait ever drawn of General John Stark. It was the work of Mary Crowninshield of Salem, Mass., a teenager and amateur sketcher, for her uncle, the Reverend William Bentley, who visited the aging hero on occasion. The unflattering depiction reflected Stark at about 82.

so far as he has, to refuse Continental regulations. He knew them before he set out.

Maryland will not let her militia be under Continental Articles of War. But then she does not send her men out of the state . . . I do not know the merit of Stark's case, but he makes great confusion.

Congress bit its tongue upon learning of Stark's stunning deed. On September 3 it asked the Board of War to give it attention. But it was not until October 4 that the Congress voted:

> That the thanks of Congress be presented to General Stark of the New Hampshire militia and the officers and troops under his command for their brave and successful attack upon ("and signal victory over" — words added by President John Hancock) the enemy in their lines at Bennington and that Brigadier General Stark be appointed a Brigadier in the army of the United States.

Stark accepted the federal appointment and remained on duty to the end of the war. He served in more sectors than any other general, and when he died at 94 in 1822, after 40 years of unobtrusive retirement on his farm, he had become the last surviving general officer of the Continental Army.

As the war ended, Congress promoted Stark to Major General rank on September 30, 1783, and some 30 years later voted him a pension of $40 a month.

* * *

Some 30 years ago, Mary Jane Wellington compiled a pamphlet for the Molly Stark Chapter, DAR, of Manchester, which has done much to perpetuate the Stark memory, which said in part:

> Molly died in June 1814, age 78, when the General was 86.
>
> At her funeral the minister made some complimentary remarks about the General. Rapping his cane sharply on the floor, he said "Tut, tut, no more of that, an' it please you."
>
> When the funeral procession left the house for the little burying ground on the knoll just south of the house, overlooking the river, the General, too feeble to accompany it, watching from the window, said sadly, "Goodbye, Molly, we sup no more together on earth."

The New Hampshire Patriot of Concord reported on May 13, 1822:

> General John Stark now is no more, his spirit departed to the God who gave it, on Wednesday, the 8th of May, after having attained the age of 93 years, 8 months and

24 days, and survived all the general officers of the Revolution!

His illness was short but extremely distressing — until the last attack, he had ever been able to walk about the house, and in pleasant weather out of doors.

His funeral obsequies were attended by a large concourse of people at his late residence in Manchester, on the bank of the Merrimack, on Friday following his death.

His remains were interred with military honors in the cemetery which had been enclosed at his own request; it is situated on a mound, being the second rise from the river, and can be seen for a distance of four or five miles up and down the Merrimack.

General Stark was of modest size, dour and taciturn. When Congress accepted his statue, Senator Jacob H. Gallinger of Concord described Stark:

Plain in appearance, awkward in manner, untrained in the arts of social life, uneducated and brusk, he, nevertheless achieved undying fame and the luster of his name will never grow dim so long as men love honesty, admire bravery and recognize the grandeur of patriotic devotion to duty and to country . . . .

Stark's features were bold and prominent, his nose well formed, the eyes light blue, keen and piercing, deeply sunk under projecting brows.

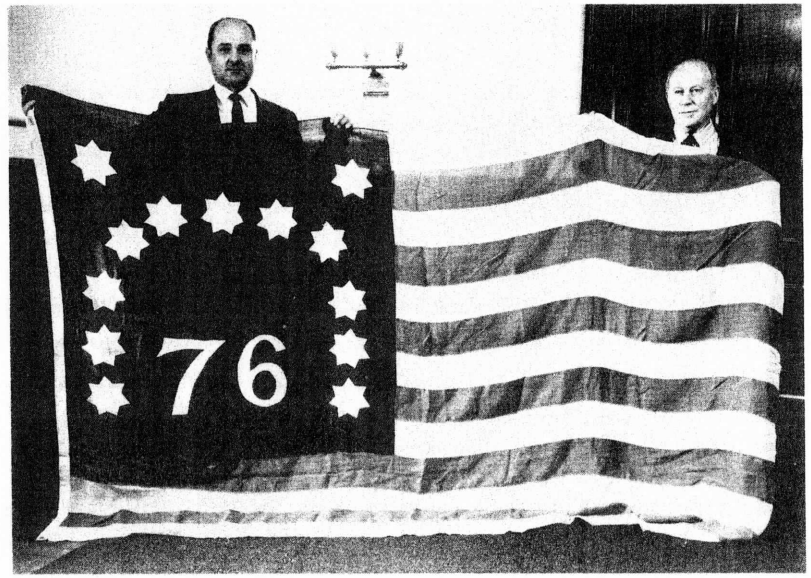
His lips were generally compressed. His whole appearance indicated courage, activity and confidence in himself.

* * *

Stark's portrait hangs inside Bunker Hill monument. But there's no New Hampshire identification and no material on his leadership there.

Back in 1899 when Boston prepared to memorialize the killed and wounded at Bunker Hill, New Hampshire vainly offered its listings on a separate tablet. But Boston officials rebuffed the idea. They insisted upon lumping them all together without state designation.

So George C. Gilmore of Manchester, in charge of the project, got his compilation printed in the 1899 biennial legislative Red



This is an old replica of the famed Bennington flag, which history says was carried by Stark's troops as the first Stars and Stripes ever in battle. The flag is flown six days a year beside Stark's State House statue, since Governor Sherman Adams sponsored the pole in 1949. Note the seven-pointed stars and the white stripes at the top and bottom of this emblem, 10 feet long and six feet wide. Shown are State House Supt. Arthur L. Petell (left), and Secretary of State Robert L. Stark, descendant of the Stark family.

Book, with a suggestion the tablet be erected in front of the State House so all the world could see the illustrious lists. But it never materialized!

* * *

The three statues of General Stark at Concord, Manchester and Washington were all put up from 1890 to 1948.

A Massachusetts theologian stimulated the first one, in the State House yard. On January 16, 1889, Professor John Taylor of Andover Theological Seminary said in a Concord speech:

I am not well enough informed of your affairs to know whether your state has erected a statue to General Stark, but it ought to if it has not, for Stark at Bunker Hill with his men from New Hampshire saved Prescott's men from annihilation.

The next day the New Hampshire SAR held its first anniversary meeting and took up the Taylor challenge. It sponsored a $12,000 fund through the Legislature that summer, and the Concord granite statue was dedicated on October 23, 1890, with colorful exercises, including the presence of 22 descendants of Stark's 11 children.

The city of Manchester sponsored a handsome monument of Stark, created by Richard Recchia, in 1948. It portrays the doughty General astride his horse, in bronze on a huge granite block. It stands in Stark Park, which the city had earlier created, beside the family burying ground, and the site of the burned home.

When Congress created Statuary Hall in our National Capitol at Washington, it invited each state to present statues of its two most prominent citizens of all time. So New Hampshire contributed marble statues of General Stark and Daniel Webster, the great orator and statesman, which were accepted with formal exercises on December 20, 1894.

* * *

It was back in 1809 that General Stark penned the phrase "Live Free Or Die," which in 1945 became New Hampshire's official motto.

It was part of a volunteer toast in a letter to Stark's old Vermont comrades, declining an invitation to head up a 32nd anniversary reunion at Bennington, because of poor health. It went in full:

> Live free or die; Death is not the worst of evils.

The following year, a similar invitation (also declined) said:

> The toast, sir, which you sent us in 1809 will continue to vibrate with unceasing pleasure in our ears, "Live free or die; Death is not the worst of evils."

New Hampshire was the last state to adopt a motto, and the Stark toast was enacted by the Legislature under unusual circumstances.

The *Manchester Union Leader* conducted a contest as the idea of a motto came before the lawmakers. It netted 3,500 suggestions and a board of judges settled upon "Strong and steadfast as the Granite hills," as proposed by Professor Curtis Hidden Page of Gilmanton, former State Senator.

The Senate approved the resolution on May 2, and then it was upset in the House of Representatives the following afternoon. Speaking for patriotic groups, Rep. J. Walker Wiggin of Manchester led a successful floor fight to substitute the words "Live Free Or Die." Rep. John P. H. Chandler, Jr., of Warner also vigorously supported the amendment, which carried by a lopsided 179 to 85 standing vote, and the Senate without argument promptly concurred.

Other historic events were tied to the birth of the motto.

Over in Europe, Berlin surrendered and Hitler committed suicide the same day, as World War II was coming to an end.

That same morning, House Speaker Norris Cotton was presented $300 in war bonds by his legislative associates as an esteem token, and in 1946 he went on to serve in the Congress ever since. This historic event due to wartime rationing was a substitute for the traditional testimonial dinner and gift-giving.

Rep. Harry P. Smart of Ossipee also smacked historic happiness that day. For Governor Charles M. Dale announced that on the following morning he would sign Smart's resolution making the Old Man of the Mountain the state emblem.

The 1969 Legislature voted to place the motto upon all noncommercial motor vehicle license plates, beginning in 1970. This developed opposition from a few persons who argued that they did not subscribe to the sentiments of the Stark motto and claimed it was a violation of their constitutional rights to be forced to carry it around on their automobiles.

The 1971 State Senate considered the complaints and turned them down. It refused by a 13 to 7 vote to give the dissenters the option of having the former "Scenic New Hampshire" phrase on their plates. As a result, a few citizens have been hailed into the courts for disfiguring their plates, and one had laid his case before the State Supreme Court as this was written.

* * *

One of four handsome murals in the State Senate chamber in the State House at Concord, contributed in 1943, commemorates General Stark's unflinching patriotism. It depicts him preparing to ride from his sawmill to his Bunker Hill glory.

The Molly Stark (DAR) Chapter of Manchester was organized on October 10, 1894, and has ever fostered the renown of the General and his wife.

Since 1937, the Chapter has owned and refurbished the modest "little red house" beside Amoskeag Falls, in which John Stark and his brothers and sisters grew up. It was given to this group for safe-keeping when the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company, which owned it for a century as part of a vast industrial complex, went out of business.

In 1968, when replacement of Amoskeag bridge forced removal of the 1736 house, it was relocated on upper Elm street, where it has become a shrine.

* * *

Ohio has a Stark County which was named for the General about 1810. There's also a Molly Stark Hospital in Canton, Ohio, of similar vintage.

* * *

New Hampshire's little 1774 town of Piercy, named for an English Earl, became Stark in 1832 a decade after the General's death.

Maine has a Starks, to honor the General, a hamlet adjacent to Farmington, which birthed Leonard Boardman Brown, 1889 founder of New Hampshire's legislative Brown Book, a biographical pamphlet still biennially issued.

* * *

Back in 1926 the Baltimore and Ohio railroad named one of its luxurious dining cars for Molly Stark, with her picture in a folder furnished by Molly Stark Chapter.

* * *

Vermont has a picturesque "Molly Stark Trail" from Brattleboro to Bennington. It is attractively marked and Bennington monument personnel report most tourist queries center on her identity, with no proper material available for such curiosity.

* * *

The New Hampshire Legislature created a "John Stark Highway" in 1949, but it's unknown to most for lack of markings. It covers the General's trek from his Manchester home to Charlestown, where he merged his forces for Bennington.

This John Stark Trail runs along Route 114 through Goffstown, Weare, Henniker, Warner and to Bradford; then up Route 103 to Newbury, Sunapee and Claremont, and finally down Route 11 to Charlestown.

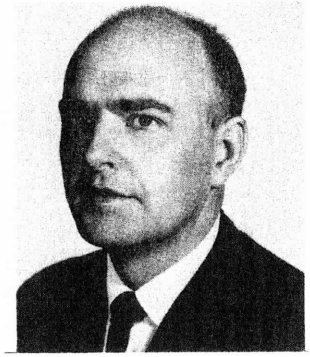
* * *

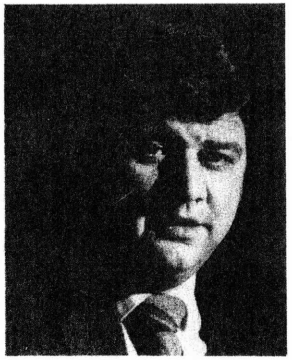
When Bennington monument was erected by Vermont in 1891, plots were set for statues of General Stark and Colonel Warner. Vermont long since put up the Warner memorial. But the Stark spot remains vacant.

The 1953 Legislature voted $1,000 to spark Stark statues at Bennington and Bunker Hill, and imposed upon the patriotic societies of the Revolution the chore of mustering most of the cost. The project failed and became forgotten.

The Right Reverend Robert M. Hatch of Randolph, retired Episcopal Bishop now producing a Bennington battle history, is promoting the missing statue to help commemorate Bennington's bicentennial in 1977.

* * *





Governor Walter Peterson and the Legislature joined in support of the unique sponsorship of the series of historic bottles by the State Liquor Commission. Shown with Peterson are Senate President John R. Bradshaw (top right) and House Speaker Marshall Cobleigh (top left), with Senate Minority Leader Harry V. Spanos (bottom right) and House Minority Leader Robert E. Raiche (bottom left).

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
CONCORD 03301

WALTER PETERSON
GOVERNOR

December 8, 1971

Costas S. Tentas, Chairman
State Liquor Commission
Storrs Street
Concord, New Hampshire

Dear Chairman Tentas:

Congratulations to your Commission in the choice of General John Stark to feature the second issue of your series of commemorative bottles to help finance New Hampshire's observance of our Nation's 1976 Bicentennial.

For all too long, too little homage has been given this warrior of the Revolution, and his intrepid valor, which helped so much to produce the American freedoms we continue to enjoy to this day.

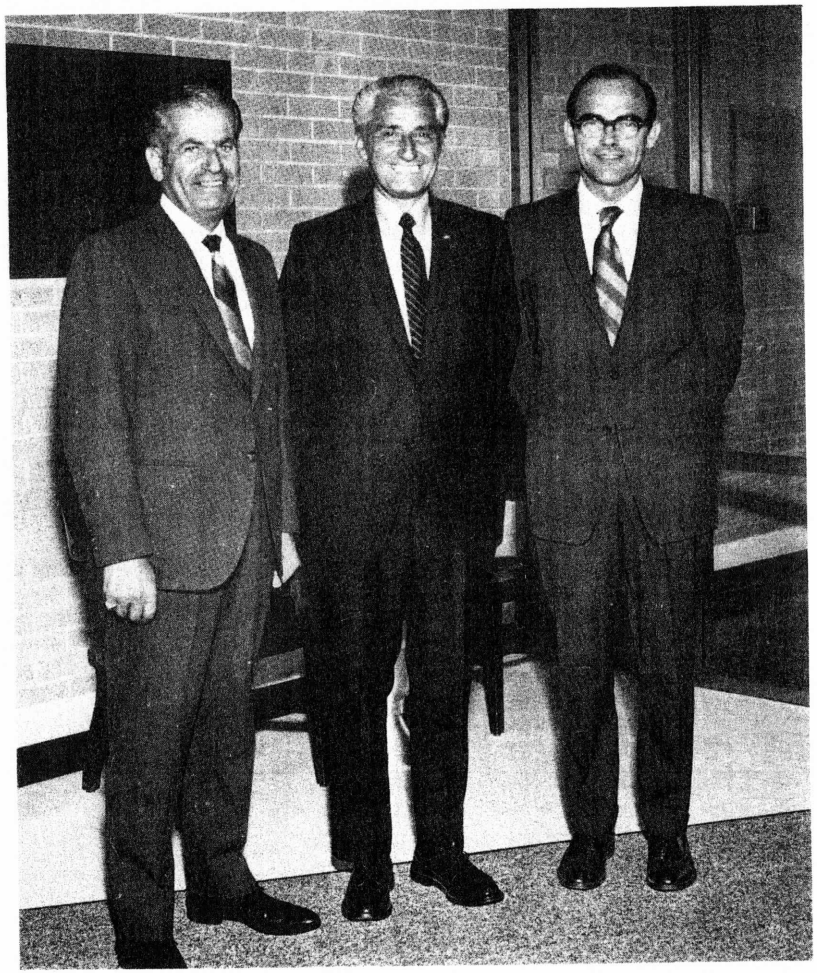
I am sure the pamphlet story of this immortal Granite State hero, as prepared by Legislative Historian Leon W. Anderson for this project, will give fresh and salutory attention to this hero of Bunker Hill and Bennington, and the stalwart New Hampshiremen who served so gallantly and unselfishly with him.

Sincerely,

Walter Peterson

Walter Peterson
Governor

WP/ck



This second of a series of pamphlets accompanying commemorative bottles to support New Hampshire's observance of the nation's 1976 Bicentennial, is sponsored by the State Liquor Commission, shown with Chairman Costas S. Tentas, flanked by Commissioners James P. Nadeau (left) and John J. Ratoff.