

## Useful Reading Material Part 2

By Mark B. Richardson

For my second essay on what I feel could be useful reading material for persons interested in reenacting the American Revolutionary War, I'm going to look at both the pre-Revolutionary years in New England, and the early years of the war. In my last essay, I suggested *The Minutemen and Their World*, by Robert Gross and *The Boston Massacre*, by Hiller B. Zobel. These books examined the social environment of the pre-Revolutionary years of rural and urban Massachusetts. Fred Anderson's, *A People's Army*, examined the pre-Revolutionary military culture in Massachusetts. To continue with this pre-revolution theme, I'm going to suggest three additional books, which I hope will wet one's appetite for more.

*Flintlock and Tomahawk, New England in King Philip's War*, by Douglas Edward Leach, takes the reader back to 1675, 100 years before the Revolution. This was New England's first colonial war between the Anglo-European settlers and the Wampanoag Indians. Here you'll read about the organization of the militia and the politics of uniting the New England Colonies for their mutual defense. Here too, you'll discover how the New Englanders developed a style of warfare unique to the North American environment. While King Philip's War wasn't based on the coming struggle for political and economic control of North America between the two European superpowers, France and Great Britain, it was an event for New Englanders which foreshadowed the colonial war era to come.

One struggle for colonial dominance in North America between the English and French can be found in, *A Land of Discord Always, Acadia from Its Beginnings to the Expulsion of Its People, 1604-1755*, by Charles D. Mahaffie. During the Colonial era, Great Britain and France engaged in several wars and skirmishes over the control of North America. The boundary between the Anglo-Protestant culture of New England and the French Catholic society of Canada wasn't always clear. For the Acadian people of Nova Scotia, they seemed to be stuck in the middle. While their ethnic heritage and language was French, they refused to pay taxes to any foreign power, and they refused to fight for any foreign power. As the

**European superpowers fought to govern these people and their lands, their allegiance was only to themselves and their way of life. By the end of the Colonial Wars, it would be the English who came to dominate their landscape, but for the Acadians, this meant the end of their way of life. By force of arms, they were uprooted from their homes and displaced to Canadian regions farther to the West, to lands in Maine and to the far away delta region of Louisiana. Their story reflects the arrogance of British Colonial rule, which many New Englanders would themselves come to object to in the years leading up to the Revolution.**

**During the Colonial years between the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War, New Englanders objected vigorously to the various taxes levied on them by the English Parliament. Parliament said that Americans needed to help pay for their defense during the French War. Many New Englanders said they had already paid for their defense with the lives of their soldiers. Up to that time in American history, there had been no greater defender of American freedoms than Major Robert Rogers.**

**With his Rangers, Major Rogers was perhaps even better known across the continent and in English Society than a young Colonel from Virginia named George Washington. To understand why New Englanders felt as though their sons had defended their country so well, one should read the memoirs of Robert Rogers, John Stark, Phinehas Stevens and others who fought in the French War. You can find the memoirs of these men in, *Memoir and Official Correspondence of Gen. John Stark*, also, a *Biography of Capt. Phinehas Stevens and of Col. Robert Rogers*, by Caleb Stark. While much of this book is about John Stark in the Revolution, it is also clear that the men who fought in the Revolution were certainly shaped by their exploits in the French War.**

**Regarding the early history of the Revolution, I'm going to recommend *Red Dawn at Lexington*, by Louis Birnbaum and, *Now We Are Enemies*, by Thomas J. Fleming. These two books have their eyes trained on Boston and the surrounding countryside. While Birnbaum examines events from 1774, immediately before the Regulars marched on Lexington and Concord, through the British evacuation of Boston in 1776, Fleming's main focus is the Battle of Bunker (Breeds) Hill. In either case, the reader**

**will examine the leadership and structure of the British Army in Boston and the formation of the American militia, which became a New England Army, and then a Continental Army around Boston. In either case, no matter which side one fought on, it is clear that it took discipline and courage to fight at Lexington and Concord, along the Battle Road and on the heights of Charlestown at Breeds Hill. While the years to come certainly tried men's souls, these opening salvos saw brave men die on both sides and taught lessons learned for the remainder of the war.**

**To understand the American Revolution, I firmly believe that one has to look at the years before the war to grasp the culture and climate which shaped the coming of the war. It is also important to understand the American colonial militia system. Certainly, the early years of the war were fought with the same dependency on the militia that had worked during the Colonial Wars. That is why I have recommended the above books. General Washington quickly came to understand he could not win the war with such a dependency on militia only. He knew that the only way to defeat the most powerful armies of the world (the British and their German mercenaries) was to create an army of professional soldiers, who were well trained and disciplined in the tactics of linear warfare. My next article on books to read will address this issue.**