

## AN OLD TIME CELEBRATION

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In our report of the recent observance of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Incorporation of Burlington, we were forced to abridge the address of Mrs. Martha E. S. Curtis. Following may be found her description of the festival held when the town as a separate township was but a year old. It was held March 18, 1799 in the house of Capt. John Wood, in the centre of the town, and now owned by the Caldwell heirs, Mrs. Sewall said:

Would that the scene had been reproduced on canvas by the art of some painter of olden time, that we could gaze tonight upon the long low-studded room with the wide cross beams, taking in several of the bedrooms of the house as it is today, the table with its smoking dishes of spare-rib and young pig, goose and turkey, served on quaint willow ware and pewter platters, the mugs of [flip?] and "cyder," when even the minister in those days did not disdain to bottle, that were lifted in response to the toasts—and the big logs blazing on the hearth and throwing their light over all.

But the men and the women who assembled on that day, how all would fade into insignificance, could we but once behold their faces. There was the minister of the Precinct, John Marrett, very likely the toastmaster of the occasion. If we forget all other names in the history of Burlington, we must remember his. To his careful chronicles, not only the town but the state and the nation are indebted, since he recorded the home view of the events of the Revolution. He was a minister of the old school, a type long since passed away, but while others were rulers in their parishes, he was the shepherd and friend of his flock. How liberal was his nature when he said, in those days of narrow theology, "I wouldn't have ye Door so large or wide as to admit unsuitable persons nor so streight and narrow as to exclude ye well disposed." He labored in his fields with his own hands. In winter, he went to meeting on "rackets"; he shared, in all ways, the simple rural life of his people. His name headed the Alarm List of the Precinct and his sympathy and aid were freely given to his country in its hour of need.

Capt. John Wood was there. We should tell our children the story of this true hero and patriot. In 1756, when but 16 years old, he went to Concord to enlist in the French War. The enlisting officer, seeing how young he was, passed him by till all the others had left. He then said, "Well youngster, what have you come for?" "To enlist, Sir," said Wood, "If you will accept me." "To enlist, do you think can kill an Indian?" "I don't know about that, but I think I can fire a bullet into a stump as far as any man."

Seeing his spirit and courage, the officer went through the ceremony of enlistment and young Wood was duly enrolled as a soldier. Later, being under command of Benedict Arnold and marching through the woods of Canada, with the snow three feet deep on the level, one of his comrades was seized with lameness so that he could not keep up with the others. The captain could not allow the company to stop as they were in haste to reach a post 30 miles ahead; he therefore asked which one of his command was willing to stay with the soldier till he could send back help. But no one answering, John Wood offered himself for this hard service. The next day they had a visit from three or four Indians. At first they were alarmed, but Wood, with ready tact, won their good will, and one of them provided a remedy for the lame soldier, so that when help arrived, three days later, he was able to go on and rejoin his company. There is no braver or more benevolent act recorded than that of John Wood, who was willing to risk his life even, willing to be left behind in that unknown and terrible forest, for the sake of his wounded comrade. John Wood came back to the Precinct, served his country as an officer in the War of Revolution, and returned to round out his honored life in the town he helped to found, and rests now, with his wife Dorcas, in the Precinct burying ground. There was the brother of the Captain, Sylvanus Wood, small in stature but great in spirit. He it was who took the first prisoner of the Revolution.

There was General John Walker, a noted man in his day, and father of President James Walker of Harvard University. Joseph and Timothy Winn, and James Bennett and Samuel Walker were there, and John Caldwell who called the first town meeting, and Capt. James Reed and Jotham Johnson. There was Capt. Ishmael Munroe, hale and hearty then, but eight years later, when the frame of the Clapp house fell at Woburn, he received injuries which made him a cripple for life. There were Ezra Wyman and Benjamin Blanchard, Major John Radford and Reuben Kimball. Samuel Nevers was there, who according to the testimony of his neighbors, imagined he had been in all the wars of the Bible. It is related of him that he had nineteen children, and considered himself forsaken of the gods, that he had not a full score.

Foremost among the women was Madam Abigail Jones, small in stature but erect and comely in spite of her 78 years, bearing herself with gentle stateliness as became the first lady of the parish. The eyes of some of this generation have looked upon one woman who may well have been in that company. Mrs. Betsey Proctor Taylor, who died March 25, 1865, aged one hundred years and five months, was then in the prime of life. She remembered the nineteenth of April, 1775, and told Father Sewall that a messenger was sent from Capt. Walker while it was yet dark, to her father, Jonathan Proctor, drummer of the company, to beat an alarm as soon as possible, as the redcoats were on the march toward Lexington.

Col. Leonard Thompson, who died in Woburn in 1880, aged 92, was then a boy in the parish, and may have witnessed the proceedings. In the background hover two dusky forms. Venus, the faithful servant of the wife of Capt. James Reed, who was brought home in a saddlebag as a present to her mistress, and who sleeps at the feet of the latest mistress she served, in the Precinct burying ground; and Cuff Trot, the lifelong friend and servitor of Madam Abigail Jones, a man so honored in the parish that he was borne to his grave personally by the selectmen of the town.