

A Journal of  
The Penobscot Expedition, Phase I  
as Kept by  
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of the

Fourth Middlesex Regiment of Massachusetts Militia

Friday, 22 June 1979

For this first of three weekends, Judy and I had made reservations at the Newagen Inn, the exact location of which was unclear to us. Phase I of Pen-Ex '79 would involve various activities around the vicinity of Boothbay, Maine; however, the precise location, time, and nature of these activities remained uncertain thanks to a remarkable lack of communication between H.Q. and the participants. Such being the case we had decided to make this more than just a reenactment weekend. A few days in Maine should settle the fact that school is out and vacation in.

To avoid traffic and allow as much time as possible down East, we set out from Lexington at 5:17 AM. Following Rte 128 and then Rte 95, by the time we crossed into Maine the clouds had set in with a steady light rain. Otherwise the trip was uneventful. After 3 hours and 40 minutes and about half a tank of gas, we found the Inn at the very tip of Cape Newagen, near the village of Southport.

When we checked in, it appeared that we might be the only guests. Once our room had been claimed, we rushed back to Boothbay Harbor and Pier 3 in order to get in on a cruise up the Kennebec. But because of the low number of riders — 21 — the captain of Goodtime Too, in order to keep from losing money on the price of his fuel, reduced the trip to 2 hours and changed the destination to Pemaquid Point. At 10 AM we set out, stopping briefly to pick up the remaining passengers at the Spruce Point Inn.

The voyage was pleasant despite the continuing rainfall. A touch of mal-de-mer disappeared upon treatment with a Syrian ham + cheese sandwich from our picnic basket. Highlights of the trip were a number of seals and cormorants.

Shortly after noon we were ashore and driving out along Rte 27 to the Railway Museum for registration with Pen-Ex. There we found Crosby Milliman and Roger in a booth without registration papers. Rather than wait until 1 PM, we returned to Newagen for a much needed nap and the rest of lunch.

It was 4:45 PM before I could force myself awake, and I figured I had best get back to registration. This time I did receive my meal ticket, but there was precious little further information. Every face at H.Q. I had first seen on AEQ-75. At the advice of Dick Wilson, captain of Newmarket Militia, I set out the extra two miles to the Little Ponderosa Camp Ground, where Bruce, Judy, and Scott Kidder of Concord had already set up home.

Back at Newagen Judy and I decided to splurge on one fine dinner. In the nearly empty dining room we had the lobster stew. What really impressed were the fine home-made salad dressings and the cream of carrot soup. (The manager had earlier mentioned his problems

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resulting from the strike by independent truckers. Fresh vegetables were being rationed in the area, and so the Inn had received only 36 cucumbers). For dessert there was "mud-pie": an ice cream filling in a brownie crust, covered with chocolate sauce.

The weather having cleared perfectly during mid-afternoon, Judy and I decided on an after dinner stroll around the grounds; however, swarms of mosquitos drove us quickly to our car, and we set out once again for Little Ponderosa. I stopped along the way for a six-pack, so as not to drink up everyone else's goods, and was spotted quickly as a militia man (The rifle shirt I was wearing for warmth was a dead giveaway). Our presence for this weekend seemed to be welcome.

At the campground we took out our folding chairs — which Judy Kidder had suggested we bring along — and set them up inside the Kidders' screened pavilion and joined the friendly gathering. Introductions were made to several families from the Newmarket Militia — most names quickly forgotten. One woman was busily sewing campaign ribbons onto the sleeve of her husband's Continental officer coat. Since I would be serving with Newmarket this weekend (The IVth Middlesex having decided against Phase I of Pen-Ex) Dick Wilson filled me in on his unit with some detail, savoring his reputation as a martinet in the field while commending the congeniality of his camp.

A small bonfire was being tended some yards away, but we preferred to remain behind our screens. On the whole this was a much quieter camp than what I have grown used to. Perhaps this was due to the division of camps. Up at the Boothbay Railway Museum, 2.1 miles south of Little Ponderosa, there were two campsites: within the grounds of the museum an 18th century encampment, and a hundred yards beyond in an open field a 20th century campground. During the scouting operations a few weeks earlier Bruce and Judy had noticed a sharp slope running the length of the 20th century ground. They immediately made a deal with the proprietors of Little Ponderosa so that the entire Newmarket crowd could have the open field by Rte 27. And so this was a rather small camp.

When 9 PM passed without sight of Bob and Audrey Childs or Peter and Stacey Murray, Bruce began to page them over the CB without success. Concern was somewhat tempered with the knowledge that their true departure time was unknown. When the two cars pulled in together after 10:00, we learned of Bob's misadventures. Back around Bath the two brand new air shocks which he had taken much trouble to install two nights before were deflated by a leaking exhaust pipe. As Bob surveyed his problem and considered where he might find an open service station at such an hour, an old, down Maine, good Samaritan stopped by and offered Bob a piece of tailpipe which he just happened to have at home. In the meantime Peter happened along and, spotting Bob's rig, stopped. Once the new pipe had been clamped in place, Peter and Bob convoyed on in.

Peter and I had little trouble in setting up that blue tent which had caused such mirth at Hubbardton two years back. Bruce aided Bob in settling his new 13½ foot trailer beside Bruce's. In short time the men were sharing their beer and the ladies were poring over Stacey's wedding photos.

Around 11:30 Judy and I headed back to the Inn to see what sleep could be had before the morning's activities,

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The desk called at 7 AM, and I gradually rolled out of bed to try to put on my outfit. This weekend I was wearing my old Concord outfit and carrying along my second spare shirt. For the first time I was wearing my Concord hat — I guess because it fits best. It was cool enough by the ocean that I also put on my rifle shirt. By 8:30 Judy and I were at the "Four Winds" lunch counter in Boothbay Harbor, and I was enjoying the 99-cent special: two eggs, two toast, and panfries. A tourist noted my outfit, asked what we were up to, and then felt the need to state that if Hitler hadn't been such a fool we'd be celebrating German wars of the past. Perhaps she thought she'd met someone even more out of touch with reality than herself.

Now came problems resulting from the lack of early information. I did not yet know the whereabouts of our mustering for this morning, and the only time in print said 9 to 10:30 AM. What was clear was that Judy was to meet the other ladies at 9 in the yard of the Railway Museum so that they might tour the stores of the Harbor. At the museum I took a few minutes to buy a Pen-Ex mug and take a chance on a Charleville musket. Everyone here was heading out for the high school ballfield back toward town several miles. There was no sign of the other ladies, so Judy and I set out for the school, where we found the whole army drawn up. The ladies were said to be still in camp, and I was told I had "a couple of minutes" to fall in. Back to the car and back up Rte 27. At the museum we found the ladies, a tardy but welcome sight. Alone I raced back to the school, got my firearms out of Bob's trunk, and hustled down to formation just in time to miss inspection. The parade not being anywhere near starting, for once I blessed "hurry-up-and-wait."

I should note here my place in the organization of this army, for this was the first that I became aware of it. Our army is divided into three (maybe four) regiments, each named after a county in eastern Maine. I understand that all Massachusetts men will be assigned to the Lincoln Regt. However, Bob, Peter, and I being the only men of the IVth Middlesex Regt. present this weekend, we were assigned to Capt. Goodwin's Co. (Newmarket Militia) of the York Regt. Our presence was especially welcome as we boosted the number of muskets from six to nine.

All guidons in our regiment are Kelly green with white letters. Goodwin, Littlefield, Cutts (of which Bruce is lieutenant), and Coupon are a few names which I recall. The regimental colors are a variation on the Bennington flag: Kelly green field with a small blue canton having a circle of 13 stars; in the center of the field is a black pine tree; above in white is "York," below "Regiment." It is a fine design. The army's colors have a red field, but beyond that details are unclear to me. The logo, which appears on mugs and T-shirts, is worthy of note: there is the simple ground plan of a square fort with four corner bastions (presumably Ft. George at Castine), and in the center of this is a small, 3-masted sailing vessel; to the left of the fort is the Union Flag, to the right the Betsy Ross flag; a circle rings the whole bearing (above) the words of Gen. Nathaniel Greene: "Fight, Get Beat, Rise and Fight Again," and (below) "Penex-79."

I should also note how little I currently know of the command

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organization. Since April I have been aware that Crosby Milliman is General Peleg Wadsworth. I am aware that someone here this weekend is portraying Solomon Lovell. I recognize John Skillin (one time Christian Febiger on AEQ) and Sam Hall (John Stark of the Bennington activities). I've even seen that former Lexington Minute Man who served as interpreter at Quebec. But who is what or holds which rank has yet to be made clear. Their uniforms positively glitter.

During the inspection General Wadsworth decided to play up to his role. Criticizing the poor showing of men in our regiment, he inquired where the expected troops were. "Tilling their fields," was the reply. "I make my living from the land," countered the general. "And," observed an officer staring pointedly at the general's obvious girth, "you do very well, sir!"

There was a slow, rambling, and apparently offhand speech to the troops, in the style of most commanders. Much of this was inaudible, depending on which end of our extended lines the general faced. All in all it was 10:30 before the parade began to move out on the 2 2/3 mile route.

The sky had remained overcast since early morning, but we suspected that this would burn off eventually. By now my rifle shirt was unnecessary, but occasional gusts from the water refreshed us. We moved up the righthand lane of Rte 27 toward the center of Boothbay Harbor, which is more of a town than Boothbay itself. Goodwin Co. was the first unit behind the officers and expedition colors. Ranging along from side to side were two very impressive "Abenaki" scouts. At the foot of the one great hill they dashed into the driveway of a gardening shop and seized two young ladies by the wrist. The girls protested that they would lose their jobs for deserting the premises. Our Indians persisted and got their captives to the edge of the woods at the other side of the road, where they seemed to hesitate. We later learned that they were expecting us to rescue the damsels from their clutches (a fact of which we had heard nothing), and instead one of our men shouted out, "Get a few good ones for us!" In time a few militia from back down the line effected the rescue.

Newmarket Militia has a neat little manoeuvre which we used this day. We began the march with 8 muskets in a column of twos (a sergeant with blunderbuss marching off to the left). At the order "Form Company Front!", the first and third ranks moved off to the right, while the second and fourth ranks moved off to the left and advanced so as to form two ranks of four men. The command "Form Platoon Front!" simply reversed the procedure and brought us back to the column of twos. From the first this manoeuvre was executed perfectly, and it was a big hit in the center of town. Another neat touch in our appearance was the matter of each musket's having a fixed bayonet.

One unit somewhere close behind us fired off volleys as it marched along, so most little kids we saw had fingers in ears in anticipation. There was one captive, a drummer from some British regiment unknown to me. At one point he was dragged out into a parking lot and shot down by one of the Abenakis. He made a very good show of it.

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I would judge there to have been somewhat better than a hundred militia in this parade, followed by perhaps 3 dozen or more camp-followers. At no time could we at the head see the tail of the column. Music of all units was massed about one third back along the line. Scott Kidder was particularly displeased because of the poor quality of some musicians from other outfits.

The parade moved into and out of town on the one-way main drags which are Rte 27. Back at the school ballfield we formed to hear the general's complements and then dismissed to lunch up on the driveway. Each man received a bag containing one sandwich (one slice of bologna, one slice of cheese) and one apple, and a cup of orange or lemon drink. Of course this closely guarded treasure was dispensed only after careful inspection of the red participant card. You've gotta be hard up to steal this food — or to guard it, for that matter.

If there was a serious problem, it was certainly the current gasoline shortage, which threatens all future activities, especially in a place as far off as Castine. Word was passed that a Gulf station in the Harbor had received a special allocation of 8,000 gallons for this one weekend; but if so, he was limited everyone to \$3 purchases, as I had already learned. Everyone whom I knew had already been able to tank up so we all expect to get home — this time.

We now headed back to Little Ponderosa to kill some time before the afternoon's events. The schedule was full — too full. You made your best choice, but you were bound to miss out. Bruce, Bob, and I opted for the 1 o'clock black powder shoot, which eliminated the craft fair (reportedly a very good one), the pistol duel (tory vs. patriot over the hand of a young lady), a display of manoeuvres by our own company, and an artillery display. We might as well have chosen otherwise for all the good our shooting did. I spent \$5 on registration and targets for musket and pistol. Of ten shots at 50 yards my Bess hit paper twice. Bruce did best of all with 3 hits for 5 on his third go-round. At least I learned how to shoot my new Scottish pistol. It works sweetly, powder from the main charge flying into the pan when the ball is rammed. With 25 grains of powder there is no discernable recoil. My second 5 shots gave 3 hits. The one problem is a tendency to misfire unless the pistol is tilted to drop sparks into the pan. For all my efforts I came back with several flint cuts on my fingers. Channel 2 of Bangor filmed the misfiring of my pistol. Bruce and I were displeased to find no distinction in pistol competition between smoothbore open sights and rifled with front and rear sights. We hadn't a prayer.

Upon our return to camp I tended to my wounds and then bought and downed several cans of soda. We made no attempt to clean muskets other than wiping powder residue away with an oily rag. When the ladies returned from shopping, Judy and I headed back to the Inn, where I took a well needed shower.

For supper we decided on lobster rolls down at the Fishermen's Co-op. The sky had first cleared by the end of lunchtime, and it was a gorgeous evening for dining on the pier. Lobster rolls, "onion chips," and cokes for just under \$10 — not bad these days. Judy decided to spend the evening at the Inn, so I headed back

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to Little Ponderosa alone. This camp was remarkably quiet compared with those of the IVth. Only a dozen or so sat talking quietly around the bonfire, which Bruce was orchestrating. Most headed for bed before 10 PM.

The sky had clouded over completely and there were occasional spits of rain. The mosquitos worked hungrily despite a can of Off. By the end of my second beer it was around 10:30, and — since things seemed unlikely to grow livelier — I went back to the Inn.

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My call came around 7:45 AM, a little late, so we had to rush a bit. For breakfast we each had two bananas left over from Friday's picnic lunch. Since all of my kit was with Bob, we headed for Little Ponderosa only to pass him heading toward the mustering place on the Common at Boothbay. The Green was quickly surrounded by the vehicles of the army, and I hurried to fall in without being too late. Today I made it with time to spare.

This "regimental formation" involved very little. Indeed it seemed an attempt to fill up an empty morning in some manner. Once all troops had fallen in, regimental commanders were ordered to report the status of their troops. Our commander reported 16 casualties of yesterday's activities — probably mosquito bites — and 2 AWOL. We did learn that the numbers in Phase I should be double in Phase II.

After the army passed in review before the officers, there was another — supposedly brief — talk. The troops were dismissed with the option of remaining for an open air service by a local minister. On the other hand there was a Getty station open just down the road with no limit on gas purchase, so Judy and I moved out to fill up while we could. Incredibly we were the only ones at the station. I imagine most people don't even look on Sundays anymore.

After a pleasant drive down by Ocean Point, we returned to the campground for lunch with the others. Already half of the tents and trailers had pulled out. Lunch consisted of cold cut sandwiches, beer, and watermelon. It was a matter of finishing off leftovers.

The only event remaining for this weekend was the tarring and feathering of the local tax collector (who in fact is the town tax collector). There was to be a little shoot out between Tories and militia, and we were to be involved. Dick Wilson commanded the right wing of the militia, about 25 in number. We reviewed our firing procedure early.

The 1 PM scheduled start was first moved up 15 minutes and then back a half hour. In fact it started closer to the original time. We formed in two ranks on the north end of the Common. Then came a call for four volunteers to help get General Wadsworth's car out of a rut at the far end of the field. I lent a hand — this excess weight sometimes helps — and in a minute or so the car was ready to roll again. There were requests for field promotions, but we got no response.

In a few minutes the double firing line began to advance down the Common to fife and drum. Across from the far left corner on some rising ground stood a small house in the yard of which stood a band of men from the Bristol Militia — including Ernie Card of the IVth Middlesex. These "Tories" plus two redcoats attempted to defend the taxman. While they fired freely, we fired by ranks, the first rank firing on command and then the second rank advancing through the first to fire also on command, and so on. We took a few "casualties" but our eleven-odd volleys drove off the Tories. The taxman was seized and brought onto the Common, where he was pinned down and a gallon of rancid "cow molasses" was poured over him, front and back. The chicken feathers stuck to him perfectly. (We were later assured that this stuff washes off in water.) That

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redcoat drummer couldn't resist and helped to throw feathers. Later one local taxpayer said that had she known his true identity, she'd have feathered him, too.

By 1:25 PM it was over, and the troops began to head for home. Once again Bob took charge of my shooting irons. After the farewells — plus thanks and future invitations to us Massachusites from Dick Wilson — Judy and I set out once more for the Inn to prepare for an afternoon of browsing through the shops of the Harbor.

It was a pleasant afternoon, although we did not see any item which had to be bought. At a bookshop we found the general staff — still in uniform — buzzing away, but I did not bother to eavesdrop. The Pen-Ex T-shirt which I had picked up just prior to the final ceremony of this day drew a salute from one red-headed officer.

A little before 5 PM we walked across the footbridge toward Spruce Point and had the lobster roll supper at the Fisherman's Co-op once again. When we got back to the car, we spent a half hour exploring some back roads and then returned to the Inn. My evening was spent in updating this journal. To bed at 11:00.



Monday, 25 June 1979

Awoke at 6:30 to another beautiful day. Arose at 8:00 to use the last of the water in our pipes. At 8:45 we set out for Lexington, taking 20 or so minutes for breakfast at the Four Winds.

The trip home was uneventful except for my car's achieving the 75,000 mile mark precisely at the intersection of Rtes. 27 and 1. It took us 3 hours and 44 minutes to travel the 174.6 miles.