



the New England

Published by the
New England
Vexillological
Association

Journal of Vexillology

November

N°15

2002

EARLY MILITIA COLORS IN MAINE

by Dave Martucci

Prior to the end of the 19th Century, most U.S. States had no official State flags. However, the military forces of these States did use flags. This was a factor of necessity—ships needed ensigns; forts needed flags and land-based units needed colors to function. This article deals with the land-based military flags of the District and State of Maine from the end of the 18th century to about 1860. Future articles will deal with the Colonial period, nautical flags and ensigns and the Civil War period to the present.

On land, there were basically two types of flags used by military forces, the Color which was carried by units and was used functionally as well as symbolically, and the Flag that was flown over forts and installations. The Color was used to transmit orders besides identify the origin of the units. In linear tactics, the soldiers were arrayed in long lines, usually two or three soldiers deep. Those on the ends were out of hearing of the officers so the Color was used to transmit orders, for example, on the command "Make Ready" to fire, the Color was raised straight up high by the Color bearer and on the command "Fire" it was swept down in front quickly and then raised back up to the normal position.

Forts, on the other hand, needed large flags that could be seen from a great distance.

There were also basically two different kinds of militia units in the pre-Civil War period. The **Standing** or **State Militia** and the **Volunteer Militia**. The former was mandatory for all able bodied males between certain ages and the latter was a voluntary system for more military-oriented men. These were usually considered the "elite" units and they were far bet-

ter equipped, accoutered and trained than the mandatory militia.

Maine is the child of Massachusetts. When the Commonwealth was formed during the Revolutionary War, Maine was designated as a "District" of that State. It's military colors were essentially those of Massachusetts, which were specified in 1787 as being white bearing the Massachusetts Arms on one side and the U.S. Arms on the other. There are three Maine Flags that generally meet these specifications still in existence.

Thomaston Cavalry —This silk color probably dates to 1799, based on the 15 stripes of the Eagle's shield and the passage at the 1799 Thomaston Town Meeting of an appropriation for \$200 for flags for the elite units of the Town (The Cavalry and the Thomaston Artillery). It is white bearing the U.S. Eagle on the Reverse; the Obverse is hidden because the flag is permanently mounted on a hard surface. It was passed down through the General Henry Knox Collection of the Montpelier Monument; Knox was instrumental in founding the unit and they played a major role in the General's funeral in 1806. (Maine Parks Service)

Stroudwater Light Infantry —Dated 1805, this white silk Color bears the Massachusetts arms on the obverse and the U.S. Arms on the reverse. In the canton is an oval of 16 gold stars. (Maine Historical Society)

Waldoboro Light Infantry —A white silk Color bearing the Massachusetts Arms on the obverse and the U.S. Shield on the reverse, which shows 17 stripes. This flag is signed "John R. Penniman" and dated 1809, although official records show the unit was accepted into State Service in 1811. (Massachusetts State Senate)

Fort Hill, Biddeford Militia —This is the only fort flag in this article and it is a wool U.S. 15 star, 15 stripe flag. (Smithsonian Institution)

Maine became a separate State in 1820. Part of the agreement between Maine and Massachusetts required Maine to return the flags (although apparently not the poles and finials) issued by the Commonwealth to the Militia. In order to supply its own flags, the new State contracted for 100 stands of Colors in 1822 that were mass produced by utilizing copper engraved plate printed silk panels that were then numbered by hand for each unit. Each flag had an identical panel sewn to each side. It is believed these are the earliest printed silk flags known.

1822 Issue Colors —two complete flags (one still on its pole) and panels from two others still exist, as well as an unnumbered panel which may be the original "test" print mentioned in the records. Based on a design by John R. Penniman (who had a hand in the production of these flags). They are white and the arms are printed in shades of brown, green, red, black and blue.

Kennebec Guards —This white silk Color is painted on one side with Lady Liberty and the U.S. Eagle and on the other with an illustration of Lafayette and an early design of the Bunker Hill Monument. No unit by this name existed in the period of its apparent origin but this author believes it was made for use by a ceremonial guard for the Marquis' proposed visit to the Kennebec in 1825. He had to cut his trip short and never got closer than Portland. (Maine State Museum)

Calais Frontier Guards —A white

Continued on page 4

MAINE'S EARLY MILITIA COLORS



Reverse Stroudwater Light Infantry (1805)



Obverse



Fort Hill, Biddeford (1813)



Thomaston Cavalry (1799) Reverse



Waldoboro Light Infantry (1809) Obverse



Obverse



Reverse

1822 issue - 3rd Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 1st Division



Massachusetts Arms on Stroudwater L.I. Color



Maine Arms on unnumbered 1822 issue print



Obverse and Reverse of unidentified Militia Color, possibly Belfast (c. 1850)



Reverse

Kennebec Guards (1825?)



Obverse



Reverse

Calais Frontier Guards (1839)



Obverse

MINUTES of the NEVA Meeting held 6/1/02 at Fort Independence, Castle Island, Mass.

ATTENDING

President Carl Gurtman, Secretary/Treasurer Dave Martucci, Tom Hale, David Roche and Robert Lloyd Wheelock.

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by President Gurtman.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

MOTION by Gurtman, SECONDED by Roche to accept the minutes of the 11/10/01 meeting as written and ACCEPTED by vote.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer reported there we had \$127.82 in the checking account as of 11/10/01 and that income totalled \$220.00 and expenses \$206.32 leaving a balance of \$141.50 as of 6/1/02. On a MOTION by Gurtman, SECONDED by Roche, the Treasurer's report was ACCEPTED by vote.

It was noted that TME Company of New Milford CT made a \$50 donation which was acknowledged with thanks.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Secretary handed out an updated membership list. Current membership stands at 31 members.

The *New England Journal of Vexillology* is published irregularly by the New England Vexillological Association, Dave Martucci, Editor. Annual membership dues in NEVA is \$10 for a single class of membership and this fee includes a subscription to the *Journal*. In addition to the print version, there is an online edition of the *Journal* found at URL <http://www.midcoast.com/~martucci/neva/nejv.html>. The editor can be contacted by writing to:

David Martucci
240 Calderwood Rd
Washington ME 04574-3440
 or by phone: **(207) 845-2857**
 or by email to:
vex@vexman.net

The views of individual authors are their own and do not reflect the views of NEVA.

ELECTION

Carl Gurtman was renominated for the office of President and reelected by unanimous vote.

OLD BUSINESS

President Gurtman began a discussion of meeting logistics. Help was solicited from members in arranging future meetings. The next meeting was also discussed. Exact meeting date, time and place will be announced by the President.

REFRESHMENTS

Thanks to Tom Hale.

ROUND TABLE

Robert Lloyd Wheelock showed the flags he bought today and said he plans to start the Flag Handbook web site soon.

Carl Gurtman went to Canada and reported on the flags he saw there. Provincial flags are often flown alone and on gas stations (Irving) in the Maritime Provinces. The Acadian Flag is also now in evidence. These seem to be changes to him. A general discussion of Canadian Flag usage ensued. He also noted the EMS Flag is becoming more popular parallel to the Fire Department flag. He showed the latest "Men at Arms" series with flags.

David Roche does "Flag Tales" with

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of NEVA will be held at **11:00 a.m.** on **Saturday, December 14th, 2002** at **The Town of York, Maine Library** just off the center of town. See directions.

Call Dave at 845-2857 (or email vex@vexman.net) if you need a ride.

DIRECTIONS TO YORK LIBRARY

- Ⓜ Take York Exit off I-95 and exit to US 1.
- Ⓜ Turn right at US 1 and immediately get into left lane.
- Ⓜ Turn left towards downtown York.
- Ⓜ In center of the town there is a statue; bear left at that monument.
- Ⓜ The library is immediately on your right.

his brother Brian (who couldn't attend due to mediocal reasons). They are all booked up since 9/11/01.

Tom Hale showed some books he recently purchased. Also showed the Fort Independence flag and initiated a discussion of flag display on vehicles. Suggested membership brochures for distribution at the Fort. Tom also reported on a "back country" Georgia survey, very unscientific. The new state flag flies at fire, police, municipal and public buildings. The old flag is flying from the homes of private citizens. Flag sales are 3:1 in favor of the old flag.

Dave Martucci showed new books, charts and flags. Reported on the East Timor flag and its variants. Will be on the History Channel at 9 pm on July 5th and his article on Maine's 1822 flags will be published in *Maine History*.

NEW BUSINESS

A booklet about the Civil War flags of New Hampshire was discussed. It was agreed NEVA would look into soliciting a donation to buy enough copies for all members.

NEXT MEETING

Exact date and location to be determined by President Carl Gurtman. Flag Tales has offered to do a presentation.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Dave Martucci
 Secretary/Treasurer

Continued from page 1 —————

silk Color bearing an image of Washington Crossing the Delaware (after Tully) on one side and the Maine Coat of Arms on the other. It was used during the 1839 "Aroostook War" on the Canadian border. (Maine Historical Society)

Unidentified Color —This silk color bears Washington on one side and the Maine Arms on the other. It is believed it may be identified with an unknown Belfast, Maine unit (based on the location of the donor) in the mid-19th Century (based on the style of the arms). This flag is mounted between two panes of glass that are painted black except for a circle in the center. It appears the flag is white.