



“Ambush at Lovewell Pond” by John Buxton.

“LOVEWELL’S FIGHT,” 1725

Cold, cold is the north wind and rude is the blast
That sweeps like a hurricane loudly and fast,
As it moans through the tall waving pines lone and drear,
Sighs a requiem sad o’er the warrior’s bier.

The war-whoop is still, and the savage’s yell
Has sunk into silence along the wild dell;
The din of the battle, the tumult, is o’er,
And the war-clarion’s voice is now heard no more.

The warriors that fought for their country, and bled,
Have sunk to their rest; the damp earth is their bed;
No stone tells the place where their ashes repose,
Nor points out the spot from the graves of their foes.

They died in their glory, surrounded by fame,
And Victory’s loud trump their death did proclaim;
They are dead; but they live in each Patriot’s breast,
And their names are engraven on honor’s bright crest.

~ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, first printed in the *Portland Gazette*, November 17, 1820.

In historical terms, North America becomes brightly illuminated about the time of the French and Indian war and, of course, afterward. While prior to that pivotal epoch and outside the work of specialists, our general view and grasped of the preceding decades leading up it tends, by comparison, to be draped in shadows; perhaps occasionally highlighted with the knowledge of a few scattered individuals, some odd events of note (widely spaced apart chronologically), and overall trends (cultural, economic, political, religious) in colonial development. While this state of things creates a fine opportunity for folk-tales and legends, on the down side our better understanding of the factors and elements in place that made possible the American Revolution, in its various facets, is materially lessened and rendered lamentably foggy. For one thing (among others that might be mentioned), did you know that not counting sundry urban riots, political rebellions, and slave insurrections, there were at least 25 wars -- not even including all the numerous other inter-tribal conflicts among the Native Americans themselves -- in colonial British, French, Dutch, Swedish, and Spanish North America prior to the French and Indian War? And it was in and through such occasions of provincial strife that the *disunited* British American colonies first learned, following the lead of Massachusetts, to act cooperatively and evolve militarily.

It is then among Francis Parkman’s lasting contributions to have preserved with admirable clarity and professional care major portions of this pre-1755 (and later) history and legacy, in his laboriously researched and artfully composed “France and England in North America” series of books: a sweeping epic of burgeoning empires colliding in a savage wilderness. The titles in roughly their *historical* (as opposed to written) order are:

The Pioneers of France in the New World (1865)
Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV (1877)
La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West (1869)
A Half Century of Conflict (1892)
Montcalm and Wolfe (1884)

The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century (1867) provides a broad overview and survey of its subject, circa 1634 to 1670; while *The Old Régime in Canada* (1874) has for its framework the period spanning 1658 to 1763.¹

Although not formally a part of the series, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* (1851) picks up where *Montcalm and Wolfe* left off.

Some have objected to Parkman's treatment of the Native Americans and his characterizing them as brutal and blood thirsty; in contrast to Europeans who are usually better behaved. Although there is some truth to this criticism, it is to some extent over-stated; since two things stand out intensely in Parkman's portrayal of the Indians; that is, first, it is clear that most of them preferred peace when it could be had with honor, and secondly how very emotional, indeed effusively sentimental, they were or could be; such as when it came to mourning their own or in their affection for their children. While the tales of atrocities by Indians are indeed numerous, Parkman nevertheless has occasions to relate how at times they showed pity on captives. At the same time, it is made plain that, by and large, the worst and most infamous attacks made against the English settlers by the Indians were planned and instigated by agents of the Bourbons. This in turn has caused Parkman to be accused by some of unfairness toward the French. Yet once more, the criticism is for the most part and at best less than just; since the copious facts and documentation Parkman puts forth adequately serve as its refutation. Without question and for all his efforts at objectivity, on the other hand, we know well where Parkman's bias lies. Yet, as we have noted elsewhere, it is among the absurd myths of positivists and similar moderns that history can ever be entirely impartial and objective. For when was a sentence ever written than did not in some measure serve a value oriented, and hence subjective, end? To then particularly fault Parkman for his latent New England patriotism is to ignore a similar and seeming foible in almost every great modern historian when the subject of his home country arises.

French and English national rivalry spilling onto the North American continent one could have assumed was inevitable. As long as the two could not get along in Europe, what hope was there of their respective colonists living peaceably side by side elsewhere? And yet the question may still be asked, which of the two sides in a given decade within North America (i.e., as opposed to wars begun in Europe) was the greater, or less excusable, aggressor? If we are to judge on the basis of who *most* frequently went on the attack, the answer would have to be the French. Part of the reason for this was that Catholicism, the state religion of the Bourbons, was *far* better at converting Indians than Protestantism. In light of which and after they generally -- the confederacy of the Iroquois excepted -- were taught and indoctrinated to side with the French, the Indians became an active tool and ready weapon to be used against the English.

A necessary distinction that needs to be made, nonetheless, is that it wasn't Catholicism itself that was to blame. Parkman himself is at pains to give many of the French Jesuits, particularly the earlier Catholic missionaries, great credit for their efforts in being friendly to and making themselves acceptable to the Indians; while in the process acting as a humane and powerful moralizing influence upon the latter. What happened rather is that once the Indians were subdued and or persuaded by the priests, it was then a simple enough matter for the French to attempt to enlist and employ them militarily. This was made all the more easy by leading the Indians to think that the English, as Protestants, were heretics and hence the obdurate and inexcusable *enemies of God*, and it was partly for this reason that the Native Americans could be got to be so exceptionally cruel and merciless towards the English settlers. But here, you see, it was not religion per se that was at fault, but its misuse and usurpation by worldly and, in this instance, monarchical

¹ There is, in addition to these "France and England in North America" titles, the in effect supplementary volume *Historic Handbook of the Northern Tour* (1885).

and economic interests. Granted, some of those guilty in this regard were those among the priests themselves; crusading, as they saw it, on behalf of the true faith. Yet in such cases, as Parkman observes, they acted much more as agents of the Bourbons than the Vatican,² and it was in this leaning to the former that they, it could be said, sinned. Of course, such priests would have strongly disagreed with this conclusion, and there is no reason to think that they were not in their own mind sincere and honest in their intentions. Even so and in retrospect, most now, Catholics included, will doubtless feel that at best the priests who incited the Indians to take up musket, bow and arrow, fire brand, hatchet and war club (supposedly) in the cause of Christ were *misguided* and in error. The sad fact remains that historically no institution, government, religion, or nation -- regardless of race, creed, or ideology -- was ever or always above being deceived and having its powers commandeered by those of bad or misguided intention, all the less so as that institution or group, etc. possessed great wealth, power, and influence.

The French, moreover, could and did argue that the English settlers, insofar as they were trespassers on French territorial claims were the overt aggressors. John Cabot and sons it is true initially discovered (mere) New Foundland on behalf of England. Yet was it not Verrazzano on behalf of France who first found and laid claim to that eastern seaboard that became the basis of England's thirteen colonies? So that from the French view it was the English who were moving in where they did not rightly belong. Further, as Parkman has himself in effect observed in his work on La Salle, we must also bear in mind, large numbers of Indians had been expelled by New Englanders to begin with, and who necessarily had migrated over to the French side of the line. France, therefore, by actively endeavoring to force back English settlements was merely safeguarding and insuring the protection of what they saw as lawfully theirs. And as far as the issue of the Indians went, did not the greater preponderance of them, and by their own vote as it were, prefer the French to the English?

Of Parkman's books, his *A Half Century of Conflict* (1892) many will find among the most satisfying when it comes to sheer drama and story telling. It was for this reason that I want to include extract from it. But from what chapter? As the book has several that might be selected for that purpose. Few pre-1750 colonial American events was more memorable than New England Provincials and Royal Navy capturing the vast citadel of Louisburg in 1745.³ And Parkman's chapters on this subject, full of colorful characters and incidents as they are, are surely worthy of reproducing. Likewise his account of the Battle for Detroit (originally the French Fort Pontchartrain) in 1712 between the fierce Outagamies (Fox tribe) and the Indians allied to the French is both thrilling and in parts even touching. Then there is the D'Anville expedition to attempt to retake Louisburg in 1746; which certainly must rank as one of the strangest and most mysterious military disasters in all 18th century history.

Though these three options weighed considerably on my mind, I decided at the last to choose the story of "Lovewell's Fight" that took place on May 9th, 1725 in modern day Maine (then a part of Massachusetts, *or* New France, depending on who you talked to.) Among other reasons, it provides an occasion to demonstrate that woodsmen *rangers* were indeed proficient and active prior to the French and Indian war. As well, it gives the opportunity to present the Indians in a pitched drawn out battle with the whites, and to that extent serves to show the Natives, despite their ultimate defeat, fighting at some of their most courageous and military best. Most early American soldiers first learned combat from the Indians and Frenchmen operating like Indians: a school that later made possible the likes and marvelous escapades of Robert Rogers, Francis Marion, and George Rogers Clark, not to mention the numerous other North American partisans and guerillas that came after them.

~~~~~\*\*\*\*\*~~~~~

---

<sup>2</sup> In *De Bella Gallico*, Book VI, Caesar delineates the high and important status their domestic Druidic priests held among the Gauls; so that a nationally based priesthood that possessed royal sway and power amidst those peoples was not by no means a later development. "For they determine respecting almost all controversies, public and private; and if any crime has been perpetrated, if murder has been committed, if there be any dispute about an inheritance, if any about boundaries, these same persons decide it; they decree rewards and punishments if any one, either in a private or public capacity, has not submitted to their decision, they interdict him from the sacrifices. This among them is the most heavy punishment. Those who have been thus interdicted are esteemed in the number of the impious and the criminal: all shun them, and avoid their society and conversation, lest they receive some evil from their contact; nor is justice administered to them when seeking it, nor is any dignity bestowed on them. Over all these Druids one presides, who possesses supreme authority among them." *Translated* by W. A. MacDevitt.

<sup>3</sup> Which, incidentally, took place as part of the War of Austrian Succession.

## CHAPTER XI.

The death of [Father] Rale [Jesuit pastor, Indian agitator, and de facto soldier of France] and the destruction of Norridgewock did not at once end the war. Vaudreuil turned all the savages of the Canadian missions against the borders, not only of Maine, but of western Massachusetts, whose peaceful settlers had given no offence. Soon after the Norridgewock expedition, Dummer wrote to the French governor, who had lately proclaimed the Abenakis his allies: "As they are subjects of his Britannic Majesty, they cannot be your allies, except through me, his representative. You have instigated them to fall on our people in the most outrageous manner. I have seen your commission to Sebastien Rale. But for your protection and incitements they would have made peace long ago."<sup>4</sup>

In reply, Vaudreuil admitted that he had given a safe-conduct and a commission to Rale, which he could not deny, as the Jesuit's papers were in the hands of the English governor. "You will have to answer to your king for his murder," he tells Dummer. "It would have been strange if I had abandoned our Indians to please you. I cannot help taking the part of our allies. You have brought your troubles upon yourself. I advise you to pull down all the forts you have built on the Abenaki lands since the Peace of Utrecht. If you do so, I will be your mediator with the Norridgewocks. As to the murder of Rale, I leave that to be settled between the two Crowns."<sup>5</sup>

Apparently the French court thought it wise to let the question rest, and make no complaint. Dummer, however, gave his views on the subject to Vaudreuil. "Instead of preaching peace, love, and friendship, agreeably to the Christian religion, Rale was an incendiary, as appears by many letters I have by me. He has once and again appeared at the head of a great many Indians, threatening and insulting us. If such a disturber of the peace has been killed in the heat of action, nobody is to blame but himself. I have much more cause to complain that Mr. Willard, minister of Rutland, who is innocent of all that is charged against Rale, and always confined himself to preaching the Gospel, was slain and scalped by your Indians, and his scalp carried in triumph to Quebec."

Dummer then denies that France has any claim to the Abenakis, and declares that the war between them and the English is due to the instigations of Rale and the encouragements given them by Vaudreuil. But he adds that in his wish to promote peace he sends two prominent gentlemen, Colonel Samuel Thaxter and Colonel William Dudley, as bearers of his letter.<sup>6</sup>

...The Norridgewocks, with whom the quarrel began, were completely broken. Some of the survivors joined their kindred in Canada, and others were merged in the Abenaki bands of the Penobscot, Saco, or Androscoggin. Peace reigned at last along the borders of New England; but it had cost her dear. In the year after the death of Rale, there was an incident of the conflict too noted in its day, and too strongly rooted in popular tradition, to be passed unnoticed.

Out of the heart of the White Mountains springs the river Saco, fed by the bright cascades that leap from the crags of Mount Webster, brawling among rocks and boulders down the great defile of the Crawford Notch, winding through the forests and intervalles of Conway, then circling northward by the village of Fryeburg in devious wanderings by meadows, woods, and mountains, and at last turning eastward and southward to join the sea.

On the banks of this erratic stream lived an Abenaki tribe called the Sokokis. When the first white man visited the country, these Indians lived at the Falls, a few miles from the mouth of the river. They retired before the English settlers, and either joined their kindred in Maine, or migrated to St. Francis and other Abenaki settlements in Canada; but a Sokoki band called Pigwackets, or Pequawkets, still kept its place far in the interior, on the upper waters of the Saco, near Pine Hill, in the present town of Fryeburg. Except a small band of their near kindred on Lake Ossipee, they were the only human tenants of a

---

<sup>4</sup> [Footnote in original] Dummer to Vaudreuil, 15 September, 1724.

<sup>5</sup> ] [Footnote in original] Vaudreuil à Dummer, 29 Octobre, 1724.

<sup>6</sup> [Footnote in original] Dummer to Vaudreuil, 19 January, 1725. This, with many other papers relating to these matters, is in the Massachusetts Archives.

wilderness many thousand square miles in extent. In their wild and remote abode they were difficult of access, and the forest and the river were well stocked with moose, deer, bear, beaver, otter, lynx, fisher, mink, and marten. In this, their happy hunting-ground, the Pequawkets thought themselves safe; and they would have been so for some time longer if they had not taken up the quarrel of the Norridgewocks and made bloody raids against the English border, under their war-chief, Paugus.

Not far from where their wigwams stood clustered in a bend of the Saco was the small lake now called Lovewell's Pond, named for John Lovewell of Dunstable, a Massachusetts town on the New Hampshire line. Lovewell's father, a person of consideration in the village, where he owned a "garrison house," had served in Philip's War, and taken part in the famous Narragansett Swamp Fight. The younger Lovewell, now about thirty-three years of age, lived with his wife, Hannah, and two or three children on a farm of two hundred acres. The inventory of his effects, made after his death, includes five or six cattle, one mare, two steel traps with chains, a gun, two or three books, a feather-bed, and "under-bed," or mattress, along with sundry tools, pots, barrels, chests, tubs, and the like,—the equipment, in short, of a decent frontier yeoman of the time.<sup>7</sup> But being, like the tough veteran, his father, of a bold and adventurous disposition, he seems to have been less given to farming than to hunting and bush-fighting.

Dunstable was attacked by Indians in the autumn of 1724, and two men were carried off. Ten others went in pursuit, but fell into an ambush, and nearly all were killed, Josiah Farwell, Lovewell's brother-in-law, being, by some accounts, the only one who escaped.<sup>8</sup> Soon after this, a petition, styled a "Humble Memorial," was laid before the House of Representatives at Boston. It declares that in order "to kill and destroy their enemy Indians," the petitioners and forty or fifty others are ready to spend one whole year in hunting them, "provided they can meet with Encouragement suitable." The petition is signed by John Lovewell, Josiah Farwell, and Jonathan Robbins, all of Dunstable, Lovewell's name being well written, and the others after a cramped and unaccustomed fashion. The representatives accepted the proposal and voted to give each adventurer two shillings and sixpence a day,—then equal in Massachusetts currency to about one English shilling,—out of which he was to maintain himself. The men were, in addition, promised large rewards for the scalps of male Indians old enough to fight.

A company of thirty was soon raised. Lovewell was chosen captain, Farwell, lieutenant, and Robbins, ensign. They set out towards the end of November, and reappeared at Dunstable early in January, bringing one prisoner and one scalp. Towards the end of the month Lovewell set out again, this time with eighty-seven men, gathered from the villages of Dunstable, Groton, Lancaster, Haverhill, and Billerica. They ascended the frozen Merrimac, passed Lake Winnepesaukee, pushed nearly to the White Mountains, and encamped on a branch of the upper Saco. Here they killed a moose,—a timely piece of luck, for they were in danger of starvation, and Lovewell had been compelled by want of food to send back a good number of his men. The rest held their way, filing on snow-shoe through the deathlike solitude that gave no sign of life except the light track of some squirrel on the snow, and the brisk note of the hardy little chickadee, or black-capped titmouse, so familiar to the winter woods. Thus far the scouts had seen no human footprint; but on the twentieth of February they found a lately abandoned wigwam, and, following the snow-shoe tracks that led from it, at length saw smoke rising at a distance out of the gray forest. The party lay close till two o'clock in the morning; then cautiously approached, found one or more wigwams, surrounded them, and killed all the inmates, ten in number. They were warriors from Canada on a winter raid against the borders. Lovewell and his men, it will be seen, were much like hunters of wolves, catamounts, or other dangerous beasts, except that the chase of this fierce and wily human game demanded far more hardihood and skill.

They brought home the scalps in triumph, together with the blankets and the new guns furnished to the slain warriors by their Canadian friends; and Lovewell began at once to gather men for another hunt. The busy season of the farmers was at hand, and volunteers came in less freely than before. At the middle of April, however, he had raised a band of forty-six, of whom he was the captain, with Farwell and Robbins

---

<sup>7</sup> [Footnote in original] See the inventory, in Kidder, *The Expeditions of Captain John Lovewell*, 93, 94.

<sup>8</sup> [Footnote in original] Other accounts say that eight of the ten were killed. The headstone of one of the number, Thomas Lund, has these words: "This man, with seven more that lies in this grave, was slew All in A day by the Indians."

as his lieutenants. Though they were all regularly commissioned by the governor, they were leaders rather than commanders, for they and their men were neighbors or acquaintances on terms of entire social equality. Two of the number require mention. One was Seth Wyman, of Woburn, an ensign; and the other was Jonathan Frye, of Andover, the chaplain, a youth of twenty-one, graduated at Harvard College in 1723, and now a student of theology. Chaplain though he was, he carried a gun, knife, and hatchet like the others, and not one of the party was more prompt to use them.

They began their march on April 15. A few days afterwards, one William Cummings, of Dunstable, became so disabled by the effects of a wound received from Indians some time before, that he could not keep on with the rest, and Lovewell sent him back in charge of a kinsman, thus reducing their number to forty-four. When they reached the west shore of Lake Ossipee, Benjamin Kidder, of Nutfield, fell seriously ill. To leave him defenceless in a place so dangerous was not to be thought of; and his comrades built a small fort, or palisaded log-cabin, near the water, where they left the sick man in charge of the surgeon, together with Sergeant Woods and a guard of seven men. The rest, now reduced to thirty-four, continued their march through the forest northeastward towards Pequawket, while the savage heights of the White Mountains, still covered with snow, rose above the dismal, bare forests on their left. They seem to have crossed the Saco just below the site of Fryeburg, and in the night of May 7, as they lay in the woods near the northeast end of Lovewell's Pond, the men on guard heard sounds like Indians prowling about them. At daybreak the next morning, as they stood bareheaded, listening to a prayer from the young chaplain, they heard the report of a gun, and soon after discovered an Indian on the shore of the pond at a considerable distance. Apparently he was shooting ducks; but Lovewell, suspecting a device to lure them into an ambuscade, asked the men whether they were for pushing forward or falling back, and with one voice they called upon him to lead them on. They were then in a piece of open pine woods traversed by a small brook. He ordered them to lay down their packs and advance with extreme caution. They had moved forward for some time in this manner when they met an Indian coming towards them through the dense trees and bushes. He no sooner saw them than he fired at the leading men. His gun was charged with beaver-shot; but he was so near his mark that the effect was equal to that of a bullet, and he severely wounded Lovewell and one Whiting; on which Seth Wyman shot him dead, and the chaplain and another man scalped him. Lovewell, though believed to be mortally hurt, was still able to walk, and the party fell back to the place where they had left their packs. The packs had disappeared, and suddenly, with frightful yells, the whole body of the Pequawket warriors rushed from their hiding-places, firing as they came on. The survivors say that they were more than twice the number of the whites,—which is probably an exaggeration, though their conduct, so unusual with Indians, in rushing forward instead of firing from their ambush, shows a remarkable confidence in their numerical strength.<sup>9</sup> They no doubt expected to strike their enemies with a panic. Lovewell received another mortal wound; but he fired more than once on the Indians as he lay dying. His two lieutenants, Farwell and Robbins, were also badly hurt. Eight others fell; but the rest stood their ground, and pushed the Indians so hard that they drove them back to cover with heavy loss. One man played the coward, Benjamin Hassell, of Dunstable, who ran off, escaped in the confusion, and made with his best speed for the fort at Lake Ossipee.

The situation of the party was desperate, and nothing saved them from destruction but the prompt action of their surviving officers, only one of whom, Ensign Wyman, had escaped unhurt. It was probably under his direction that the men fell back steadily to the shore of the pond, which was only a few rods distant. Here the water protected their rear, so that they could not be surrounded; and now followed one of the most obstinate and deadly bush-fights in the annals of New England. It was about ten o'clock when the fight began, and it lasted till night. The Indians had the greater agility and skill in hiding and sheltering themselves, and the whites the greater steadiness and coolness in using their guns. They fought in the shade; for the forest was dense, and all alike covered themselves as they best could behind trees, bushes, or fallen trunks, where each man crouched with eyes and mind intent, firing whenever he saw, or thought he saw, the head, limbs, or body of an enemy exposed to sight for an instant. The Indians howled like wolves, yelled like enraged cougars, and made the forest ring with their whoops; while the whites replied with shouts and cheers. At one time the Indians ceased firing and drew back among the trees and undergrowth,

---

<sup>9</sup> [*Footnote in original*] Penhallow puts their number at seventy, Hutchinson at eighty, Williamson at sixty-three, and Belknap at forty-one. In such cases the smallest number is generally nearest the truth.

where, by the noise they made, they seemed to be holding a “pow-wow,” or incantation to procure victory; but the keen and fearless Seth Wyman crept up among the bushes, shot the chief conjurer, and broke up the meeting. About the middle of the afternoon young Frye received a mortal wound. Unable to fight longer, he lay in his blood, praying from time to time for his comrades in a faint but audible voice.

Solomon Keyes, of Billerica, received two wounds, but fought on till a third shot struck him. He then crawled up to Wyman in the heat of the fight, and told him that he, Keyes, was a dead man, but that the Indians should not get his scalp if he could help it. Creeping along the sandy edge of the pond, he chanced to find a stranded canoe, pushed it afloat, rolled himself into it, and drifted away before the wind.

Soon after sunset the Indians drew off and left the field to their enemies, living and dead, not even stopping to scalp the fallen,—a remarkable proof of the completeness of their discomfiture. Exhausted with fatigue and hunger,—for, having lost their packs in the morning, they had no food,—the surviving white men explored the scene of the fight. Jacob Farrar lay gasping his last by the edge of the water. Robert Usher and Lieutenant Robbins were unable to move. Of the thirty-four men, nine had escaped without serious injury, eleven were badly wounded, and the rest were dead or dying, except the coward who had run off.

About midnight, an hour or more before the setting of the moon, such as had strength to walk left the ground. Robbins, as he lay helpless, asked one of them to load his gun, saying, “The Indians will come in the morning to scalp me, and I’ll kill another of ’em if I can.” They loaded the gun and left him.

To make one’s way even by daylight through the snares and pitfalls of a New England forest is often a difficult task; to do so in the darkness of night and overshadowing boughs, among the fallen trees and the snarl of underbrush, was well nigh impossible. Any but the most skilful woodsmen would have lost their way. The Indians, sick of fighting, did not molest the party. After struggling on for a mile or more, Farwell, Frye, and two other wounded men, Josiah Jones and Eleazer Davis, could go no farther, and, with their consent, the others left them, with a promise to send them help as soon as they should reach the fort. In the morning the men divided into several small bands, the better to elude pursuit. One of these parties was tracked for some time by the Indians, and Elias Barron, becoming separated from his companions, was never again heard of, though the case of his gun was afterwards found by the bank of the river Ossipee.

Eleven of the number at length reached the fort, and to their amazement found nobody there. The runaway, Hassell, had arrived many hours before them, and to excuse his flight told so frightful a story of the fate of his comrades that his hearers were seized with a panic, shamefully abandoned their post, and set out for the settlements, leaving a writing on a piece of birch-bark to the effect that all the rest were killed. They had left a supply of bread and pork, and while the famished eleven rested and refreshed themselves they were joined by Solomon Keyes, the man who, after being thrice wounded, had floated away in a canoe from the place of the fight. After drifting for a considerable distance, the wind blew him ashore, when, spurred by necessity and feeling himself “wonderfully strengthened,” he succeeded in gaining the fort.

Meanwhile Frye, Farwell, and their two wounded companions, Davis and Jones, after waiting vainly for the expected help, found strength to struggle forward again, till the chaplain stopped and lay down, begging the others to keep on their way, and saying to Davis, “Tell my father that I expect in a few hours to be in eternity, and am not afraid to die.” They left him, and, says the old narrative, “he has not been heard of since.” He had kept the journal of the expedition, which was lost with him.

Farwell died of exhaustion. The remaining two lost their way and became separated. After wandering eleven days, Davis reached the fort at Lake Ossipee, and, finding food there, came into Berwick on the twenty-seventh. Jones, after fourteen days in the woods, arrived, half dead, at the village of Biddeford.

Some of the eleven who had first made their way to the fort, together with Keyes, who joined them there, came into Dunstable during the night of the thirteenth, and the rest followed one or two days later. Ensign Wyman, who was now the only commissioned officer left alive, and who had borne himself throughout with the utmost intrepidity, decision, and good sense, reached the same place along with three other men on the fifteenth.

The runaway, Hassell, and the guard at the fort, whom he had infected with his terror, had lost no time in making their way back to Dunstable, which they seem to have reached on the evening of the eleventh. Horsemen were sent in haste to carry the doleful news to Boston, on which the governor gave orders to Colonel Tyng of the militia, who was then at Dunstable, to gather men in the border towns, march with all speed to the place of the fight, succor the wounded if any were still alive, and attack the Indians, if he could find them. Tyng called upon Hassell to go with him as a guide; but he was ill, or pretended to be so, on which one of the men who had been in the fight and had just returned offered to go in his place.

When the party reached the scene of the battle, they saw the trees plentifully scarred with bullets, and presently found and buried the bodies of Lovewell, Robbins, and ten others. The Indians, after their usual custom, had carried off or hidden their own dead; but Tyng's men discovered three of them buried together, and one of these was recognized as the war-chief Paugus, killed by Wyman, or, according to a more than doubtful tradition, by John Chamberlain.<sup>10</sup> Not a living Indian was to be seen.

The Pequawkets were cowed by the rough handling they had met when they plainly expected a victory. Some of them joined their Abenaki kinsmen in Canada and remained there, while others returned after the peace to their old haunts by the Saco; but they never again raised the hatchet against the English.

Lovewell's Pond, with its sandy beach, its two green islands, and its environment of lonely forests, reverted for a while to its original owners,—the wolf, bear, lynx, and moose. In our day all is changed. Farms and dwellings possess those peaceful shores, and hard by, where, at the bend of the Saco, once stood, in picturesque squalor, the wigwams of the vanished Pequawkets, the village of Fryeburg preserves the name of the brave young chaplain, whose memory is still cherished, in spite of his uncanonical turn for scalping.<sup>11</sup> He had engaged himself to a young girl of a neighboring village, Susanna Rogers, daughter of John Rogers, minister of Boxford. It has been said that Frye's parents thought her beneath him in education and position; but this is not likely, for her father belonged to what has been called the "Brahmin caste" of New England, and, like others of his family, had had, at Harvard, the best education that the country could supply. The girl herself, though only fourteen years old, could make verses, such as they were; and she wrote an elegy on the death of her lover which, bating some grammatical lapses, deserves the modest praise of being no worse than many New England rhymes of that day.

The courage of Frye and his sturdy comrades contributed greatly to the pacification which in the next year relieved the borders from the scourge of Indian war.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> [Footnote in original] The tradition is that Chamberlain and Paugus went down to the small brook, now called Fight Brook, to clean their guns, hot and foul with frequent firing; that they saw each other at the same instant, and that the Indian said to the white man, in his broken English, "Me kill you quick!" at the same time hastily loading his piece; to which Chamberlain coolly replied, "Maybe not." His firelock had a large touch-hole, so that the powder could be shaken out into the pan, and the gun made to prime itself. Thus he was ready for action an instant sooner than his enemy, whom he shot dead just as Paugus pulled trigger, and sent a bullet whistling over his head. The story has no good foundation, while the popular ballad, written at the time, and very faithful to the facts, says that, the other officers being killed, the English made Wyman their captain,—

"Who shot the old chief Paugus, which did the foe defeat,  
Then set his men in order and brought off the retreat."

<sup>11</sup> [Footnote in original] The town, however, was not named for the chaplain, but for his father's cousin, General Joseph Frye, the original grantee of the land.

<sup>12</sup> [Footnote in original] Rev. Thomas Symmes, minister of Bradford, preached a sermon on the fate of Lovewell and his men immediately after the return of the survivors, and printed it, with a much more valuable introduction, giving a careful account of the affair, on the evidence of "the Valorous Captain Wyman and some others of good Credit that were in the Engagement." Wyman had just been made a captain, in recognition of his conduct. The narrative is followed by an attestation of its truth signed by him and two others of Lovewell's band.

A considerable number of letters relating to the expedition are preserved in the Massachusetts Archives, from Benjamin Hassell, Colonel Tyng, Governor Dummer of Massachusetts, and Governor Wentworth of New Hampshire. They give the various reports received from those in the fight, and show the action taken in consequence. The Archives also contain petitions from the survivors and the families of the slain; and the legislative Journals show that the petitioners received large grants of land. Lovewell's debts contracted in raising men for his expeditions were also paid.

The papers mentioned above, with other authentic records concerning the affair, have been printed by Kidder in his *Expeditions of Captain John Lovewell*, a monograph of thorough research. The names of all Lovewell's party, and biographical notices of some Hutchinson, Fox, *History of Dunstable*, and of them, are also given by Mr. Kidder. Compare Penhallow, Bouton, *Lovewell's Great Fight*. For various suggestions touching Lovewell's Expedition, I am indebted to Mr. C. W. Lewis, who has made it the subject of minute and careful study.



---

A ballad which was written when the event was fresh, and was long popular in New England, deserves mention, if only for its general fidelity to the facts. The following is a sample of its eighteen stanzas:--

“ ’T was ten o’clock in the morning when first the fight begun,  
And fiercely did continue till the setting of the sun,  
Excepting that the Indians, some hours before ’t was night,  
Drew off into the bushes, and ceased awhile to fight;

“But soon again returnèd in fierce and furious mood,  
Shouting as in the morning, but yet not half so loud;  
For, as we are informèd, so thick and fast they fell,  
Scarce twenty of their number at night did get home well.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Our worthy Captain Lovewell among them there did die;  
They killed Lieutenant Robbins, and wounded good young Frye,  
Who was our English chaplain; he many Indians slew,  
And some of them he scalped when bullets round him flew.”

Frye, as mentioned in the text, had engaged himself to Susanna Rogers, a young girl of the village of Boxford, who, after his death, wrote some untutored verses to commemorate his fate. They are entitled, *‘A Mournful Elegy on Mr. Jonathan Frye,’* and begin thus:

“Assist, ye muses, help my quill,  
Whilst floods of tears does down distil;  
Not from mine eyes alone, but all  
That hears the sad and doleful fall  
Of that young student, Mr. Frye,  
Who in his blooming youth did die.  
Fighting for his dear country’s good,  
He lost his life and precious blood.  
His father’s only son was he;  
His mother loved him tenderly;  
And all that knew him loved him well;  
For in bright parts he did excel  
Most of his age; for he was young,--  
Just entering on twenty-one;  
A comely youth, and pious too;  
This I affirm, for him I knew.”

She then describes her lover’s brave deeds, and sad but heroic death, alone in a howling wilderness; condoles with the bereaved parents, exhorts them to resignation, and touches modestly on her own sorrow.

In more recent times the fate of Lovewell and his companions has inspired several poetical attempts, which need not be dwelt upon. Lovewell’s Fight, as Dr. Palfrey observes, was long as famous in New England as Chevy Chase on the Scottish Border.

---

*Wm. Thomas Sherman*

1604 NW 70th St.

Seattle, Washington 98117

206-784-1132

[wts@gunjones.com](mailto:wts@gunjones.com)

<http://www.gunjones.com> and [http://www.scribd.com/wsherman\\_1](http://www.scribd.com/wsherman_1)

*For Lee’s Legion on Face Book:*

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/LeesLegion/>