

MEN OF GRANITE

TRUE STORIES OF NEW HAMPSHIRE'S FIGHTING MEN

BY WILLIAM E. MCGEE



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Dedication

To Dr. Robert G. LeBlanc, PhD, Professor Emeritus, University of New Hampshire whose knowledge, vitality and humanity touched so many lives. Whose own life was tragically cut short on 9-11-2001.

Good friends are never forgotten.

All profits from the sale of this book go to the Robert G. LeBlanc Memorial Scholarship Fund administered by the University of New Hampshire Foundation, Durham, NH.

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The family of General Melvin Zais; Mrs. Patricia Light Zais and son Col. Barrie Zais

Foreword

IN 1963 I WAS A PRIVATE IN THE U.S. ARMY HERE IN THE states and Bill McGee was flying helicopters in Viet Nam. He sent me letters telling me about putting iron stove lids under his seat to protect from small arms fire. He also wrote me about shooting water buffalo to keep the Viet Cong hungry, and provide steaks for his unit's mess hall.

This was before anyone I knew was aware of Viet Nam. I had to go to the post library at Fort Belvoir to find the place on the globe. Couple years later Bill and I were no longer on active duty and every one knew where Viet Nam was.

Bill is my oldest and dearest friend. We go way back. In 1948 Bill and I were Boy Scouts together in Troop Four, Milford, New Hampshire. Bill's uniform was always neat and squared away. He kept his bedroom neat. He had a mint collection of the very first Walt Disney comic books. He was on the Milford High varsity basketball team and got good grades in school. He was an altar boy at St. Patrick's Church. Bill was the only one of our bunch who became an Eagle Scout.

I was always a little amazed that he continued to be my friend. He succeeded in all the things that I wanted to succeed in but could not. Also he was taller and better looking than I and had a lot more success with girls. Many of us, back then, joined Explorer Scouts. We Explorers held dances in the Boy Scout rooms in the town hall. "Explorers" was a perfect name for us. We'd get into uniform for the dances. We looked good in uniform. Also we felt more confident around the girls.

Our Scoutmaster was John LaTourette. Mr. LaTourette had come home from World War II to teach school and live the

American life. We adored him. He was patient and practical and knew all about Boy Scout stuff like building campfires and sleeping in the woods.

At the University of New Hampshire, Bill joined the Reserve Officers Training Corps. He loved the uniform and he loved the Army. For his entire life Bill McGee has had two great passions: the Boy Scouts and the military. I have never had a conversation with him that did not include both subjects. So it was inevitable, Bill would someday write a history of the Scouts . . . or he would write a military history.

When he told me he was researching a history of New Hampshire military heroes I knew it would be done with love and it would be thorough. The fact that it is a delight to read is frosting on the cake. This book will be a resource to students and historians for years to come. Researchers and teachers will thank Bill McGee for this work.

As I thank him.

Bill McGee amazes me.

Fritz Wetherbee
Acworth, New Hampshire
October 2007

Introduction

HIGH ABOVE FRANCONIA NOTCH, THE GATEWAY TO northern New Hampshire, was the profile of the Old Man of the Mountain.

Daniel Webster once said, “Men hang out their signs indicative of their respective trades; shoe makers hang out a gigantic shoe; jewelers a monster watch, and the dentist hangs out a gold tooth, but up in the mountains of New Hampshire, God Almighty has hung out a sign to show that he makes men.”

These are the true stories of New Hampshire’s fighting men—soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen who made significant contributions in their service to their country from the French and Indian War to Iraq.

Eleven Medal of Honor recipients.

Men who were the namesakes of three Army forts, an Air Force base, two Army airfields, and four Navy destroyers.

Admirals, generals, privates and corporals—submariners, parachutists, and fighter pilots from New Hampshire . . .

Granite Staters . . .

Men of Granite.



FRENCH & INDIAN WAR

1755–1763

BRITAIN AND FRANCE FOUGHT FOUR WARS IN AMERICA between 1689 and 1763. The first, King William's War, which lasted from 1689 to 1697, was indecisive. The two major engagements involved were Sir William Phips' expedition of New Englanders occupying Port Royal in Acadia (Nova Scotia) and the French and Indians burning the English town of Schenectady, New York.

The second was Queen Anne's War, 1702-1713. The French, with their Indian allies, massacred the inhabitants of Deerfield, Massachusetts. Spain, now allied with France, attacked South Carolina from its stronghold, St. Augustine, Florida. A new British interest in Canada inspired a joint expedition of British troops and New Englanders against Quebec. The Quebec attack was repulsed by the French, but Acadia was conquered again. This resulted in Britain's acquisition of Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and the Hudson Bay region.

King George's War, 1739-1748, was notable mainly for the success of Sir William Pepperrell whose force seized French Louisburg on Cape Breton Island (1745). A peace treaty mandated the return of the captured territory.

The fourth conflict known in America as the French and Indian War, focused on the western territories on the upper Ohio River and Lake Champlain region in upper New York. Both Britain and France wanted to build a fort at the fork of the Ohio River. The French erected Fort Duquesne (later Pittsburgh) after maneuvers in which young George Washington played a part. The French wiped

out the British under General Edward Braddock (July 9, 1755). For the next two years, the war went against Britain. Fort Oswego (New York), on Lake Ontario, was destroyed in 1756 as was Fort William Henry on Lake George in 1757.

Britain then turned to its great war minister, William Pitt, who inspired the nation with a passion for victory. In 1758, British forces conquered Forts Louisburg, Duquesne, and Frontenac. These successes opened the way to acquire Canada. Quebec fell in 1759 and Montreal in 1760. By the Treaty of Paris, in 1763, Britain acquired Canada and in America the land west of the Mississippi River.

The four British-French wars contributed materially to the growth of self-government in the thirteen American colonies. In the thirty-eight years of war, Britain could send only a small fraction of its army. The colonies were repeatedly required to provide both soldiers and money to support the wars. The colonial assemblies used their aid as a bargaining chip to gain privileges extending and intensifying their spirit of freedom. The battlefields developed such military leaders as George Washington, John Stark and Robert Rogers and his Rangers.

ROBERT ROGERS

Major, Rogers' Rangers
French and Indian War

Born: Nov. 18, 1731, Methuen, Massachusetts
Died: May 18, 1795, London, England
Buried: London, England
Battles: Louisburg, Cape Breton, 1757
Fort Carillon, Ticonderoga, 1758
St. Francis, Canada, 1759
Montreal, Canada, 1760

Wrote the first manual of warfare in the Americas

ROBERT ROGERS CONCEIVED THE IDEA OF A SMALL UNIT OF skilled woodsmen, well-trained, highly disciplined, and equipped to fight using hit and run tactics. These tough patriots would march all night in all weather to be ready for a surprise attack at dawn. These men were rangers, Rogers' Rangers. His Rules for Rangers (see page 11) are still used by Rangers today.

Robert Rogers was born to James and Mary Rogers on November 18, 1731, in Methuen, a small Massachusetts town north of the Merrimack River near the New Hampshire border. James and Mary were of Scottish descent who emigrated from Ireland. Robert was the fourth of their five sons, the youngest was a daughter, Mary.

Because James held no legal title to his land in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, he and some neighbors moved thirty-five miles north to the "great meadow" of New Hampshire in 1738. James purchased 21,090 acres at Mountalona (now Dunbarton) some ten miles south of Rumford (now Concord).

Young Robert received no formal education, but paternal guidance and the family Bible provided the basics of reading and writing. In his published journals, Rogers refers to his early education as woods lore and woodcraft he learned from local Indians.

The Rogers boys helped clear their family land for planting. Trees were felled, stumps and rocks had to be removed before

plowing. It was a hard life, made more difficult by the threat of frontier raids by French-led Indians. In 1745, Robert, now fourteen, joined Capt. Daniel Ladd's company of militia to hunt down the marauders. He was probably happy to leave the toil and tedium of farming for the freedom of the forests and the thrill of the hunt. By the following spring, Robert was back helping till the family fields. That fall, he was among the first to enlist in Capt. Ebenezer Eastman's company of militia.

James Rogers' original land claims were reduced to two hundred acres following a dispute between Massachusetts Bay and the original land grantee, Capt. John Mason. The area of Mountalona became a new town—Starktown, later called Dunbarton. In 1752, Robert left farming for the lure of the frontier forest.

In March 1753, he and twenty men trudged north on snowshoes to survey the fertile Coos Meadows as authorized by the New Hampshire Assembly. Their guide was John Stark, who had seen the meadows a year before when he had been captured by Indians.

In September 1753, Robert Rogers purchased land in the town of Merrimack, and from that time he was usually identified in deeds as a member of that community.

Robert, although a keen observer and interpreter of woods and Indian lore, was not so astute in his financial dealings. He was duped into receiving and then passing some counterfeit money. A trial was held in Portsmouth on February 7, 1755. Robert and others were released on bond while the real counterfeiter escaped.

The drums of war were beating. The French in Canada encircled the English colonies along the Atlantic seacoast. The French invaded Nova Scotia, erecting forts and inciting the Acadians to revolt. On February 12, 1755, Gov. William Shirley, of Massachusetts, issued a call for volunteers for a regiment to drive the French out of Nova Scotia. Robert Rogers seized this opportunity to change his image from that of counterfeiter. He offered to recruit twenty men for the Massachusetts Regiment.

Meanwhile, the theater of war had enlarged. The New Hampshire Assembly voted in March to raise a regiment of five hundred men to force the French out of Crown Point, whose fort was located

at a strategic narrows of Lake Champlain on the New York side. The New Hampshire Grants, now Vermont, was on the eastern side of the lake.

Rogers was ordered by Governor Benning Wentworth to come to Portsmouth to recruit men for the New Hampshire regiment. By April 24, Robert had brought in fifty men. His unit became Company One. He was its captain and John Stark was his lieutenant. Rogers' company of men were sworn in as private soldiers in a company of foot in a regiment, under command of Joseph Blanchard.

Rogers' company marched to Albany, New York, then northward to join Sir William Johnson's New York force of farmers, tradesmen, mechanics, and laborers at Lake George. Johnson sent Rogers and two others to reconnoiter the French fort at Crown Point. They returned with accurate information. Other scouting parties were reluctant to venture too far from the safety of their encampment at the log fort that later would become Fort William Henry. Rogers and only a few others remained at the fort over the winter of 1755-56.

During the winter, Rogers led a series of scouts and raids on the French that laid out the basis of his "ranging tactics." These revealed two of Rogers' characteristics—his aggressiveness and his uncanny woodsmanship. He would conduct his forays during the extremes of winter and into the heart of the enemy-held territory, and still return with few, if any, casualties.

News of Rogers' expeditions spread throughout the English colonies. Newspapers were filled with details and even his military colleagues were impressed with his feats. Robert Rogers was summoned to Boston, where he met with William Shirley, Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and commander-in-chief of the British Army in North America. Governor Shirley appointed Rogers captain of an independent company of rangers on May 23. The new unit of sixty privates, two sergeants, and four officers would receive the same pay as British regular soldiers, twice as much as what provincial troops earned.

An excited and enthused Robert Rogers returned to Portsmouth and Rumford to recruit New Hampshire woodsmen for his company of Rangers. Robert's brother, Richard, became his

first lieutenant. His trusted friend, John Stark, became a lieutenant second in rank to Richard. By mid-April, thirty-seven new recruits were on the march west to Fort Number Four on the Connecticut River. The company split into two units and made their ways separately to Fort William Henry on May 11.

For the remainder of 1756, scouting parties were sent to observe the French army strengthening their Fort Carillon (Ticonderoga) and up into Lake Champlain to take a few prisoners. A second ranger company was formed with Richard Rogers as its commander. Thirty Stockbridge Indians were incorporated into the two ranger companies.

In January 1757, Rogers led a raid against Crown Point. His men were each issued two weeks food rations, sixty rounds of powder and ball. Each man had snowshoes slung over his back, over the other shoulder hung his food knapsack, below it a canteen with diluted rum, under the right arm hung a powder horn. A blanket went over the head like a monk's hood and fastened in their waist-belts. Mittens were tied to the neck by cords to prevent loss. Muskets were carried like clubs over their shoulders. Reaching the frozen lake, the men donned skates and proceeded swiftly northward.

Halfway between Carillon and Crown Point, they were detected and became engaged in an all-day skirmish against a larger force of French and Indians.

The rangers withdrew during darkness and dragged themselves back to Fort Henry. Although they killed many more of the enemy, it was Rogers' worst loss of men. Of the seventy-four engaged, thirteen were killed, nine wounded, and seven taken prisoner.

Gov. William Shirley's military successor, John Campbell, Earl of Loudoun, could see that the success of Rogers' scouting and skirmishes was not by luck or chance. Rogers trained and directed his rangers by carefully thought-out tactics. Loudoun wanted to know these rules and requested that Rogers tell him. The result was the first written manual of warfare in the New World.

In response to Rogers' request, Loudoun commissioned him on April 6, 1758, to major of the Rangers in his majesty's service.

The rangers also received deserved official recognition by the issue of uniforms replacing their homespun clothes and leather hunting shirts. The new uniform was green, signifying woodsman. The outer coat was a short jacket similar to grenadiers and drummers. Underneath was a waistcoat lined with green serge. Linen or canvas drawers extended down to the knees and brown leggings up the rangers' thighs. The footwear was moccasins. Officers on parade wore tricorns piped with silver edging. Men wore plain tricorns with a sprig of evergreen stuck on the side. When on scouting missions, they preferred to wear the flat Scotch bonnets.

Their tools of the trade remained the same brown bess muskets as the regular British soldiers. The standard issue cartouche (cartridge box) replaced the leather pouch. A leather sling over the right shoulder held bayonet and tomahawk. Another sling carried a metal canteen and at the waist, a sheathed knife. Haversacks carried rations, and blankets were rolled and slung over the left shoulder.

The 1760 assault on Montreal was planned to have three forces converge on the city simultaneously. Lord Jeffrey Amherst's force would come down the Saint Lawrence River. General Murray would advance from Quebec, and General Haviland, with Rogers' six Ranger Companies and two Indian units, would smash through from the south. Three British armies, of thirty-two thousand men, converged on Montreal and on September 7, 1760, the French capitulated. Montreal and the entire country of Canada became subject to the British king.

The French also ceded their holdings in the American western frontier. Robert Rogers was sent to carry the Union Jack to the French forts west of Fort Pitt. This assignment offered Rogers a new lease on life. Five years of war had given him only the temporary rank of major, his service had involved him in debt, and creditors were pressing him for payment.

With written orders from Lord Amherst, Rogers set off for forts at Detroit and Michilimackinac, on September 13, 1760. With two ranger companies and a guide, the group in fifteen whaleboats began their trek upriver against the Saint Lawrence current, into Lake Ontario. They had to portage around Niagara Falls to reach the river to Lake Erie and westward to Detroit.

On November 23, they camped at the mouth of the Huron River and met with the Ottawa and Huron war chiefs, most likely including Pontiac. A pipe of peace was smoked and gifts were exchanged. The new Indian allies accompanied Rogers' party to Fort Detroit, where Captain Bellestre read the terms of the French surrender at Montreal. The French rule in the west ended with the surrender of Fort Detroit.

Rogers returned to New York and at age twenty-nine, made his decision to remain in the army. Amherst offered him a captain's commission in the regular British Army and the chance to fight the Cherokees in South Carolina. Rogers gladly accepted, but the problems of his indebtedness persisted. He had accumulated bills of more than six-thousand pounds to pay for his men and their equipment. Both the colonies of New Hampshire and Massachusetts refused to make good on their share, then the Crown refused its liability, leaving Rogers up to his neck in debt.

Although his financial affairs were not going well, there was a happy side to his life. He returned to Portsmouth, and married twenty year old Elizabeth Browne, his beloved Betsey. They were married June 30, 1761, in Queen's Chapel by her father, Rev. Arthur Browne.

In South Carolina, Rogers petitioned the governor to appoint him Superintendent of Southern Indians. He did not receive the appointment. By the summer of 1762, Rogers was suffering from malaria and returned to Betsey in New Hampshire. His creditors were still dogging him.

In 1763, Rogers was sent west again to aid the British at Fort Detroit, now fighting the massed Indians in what was called "Pontiac's War." Rogers' heroic stand covering the retreat of the British soldiers prevented the annihilation of the entire force. In October, Pontiac ceased the fighting. Rogers returned to New York, where he was jailed by his creditors. He was "broken out" of jail by soldiers of the Royal Americans Battalion who sympathized with Rogers' plight. He returned to New Hampshire only to learn that General Gage refused to honor the instructions of General Amherst stating that Rogers should receive full pay for his service. Gage in fact refused him any pay.

Rogers, in desperation, fled to England leaving his Betsey behind. He hoped that he could petition the government directly for his back pay and allowances. He published two books at his own expense to bolster his financial claims. His descriptions of the native copper and the possibility of a northwest passage through the American West to the Pacific Ocean drew much interest.

The British government must have been intrigued by the territory and the possibility of a northwest passage. Rogers was appointed commander of Fort Michilimackinac and superintendent of the Indians there and west of that post.

Rogers returned to America in January 1766, hoping to receive back pay for his military service and begin his new career as governor of the western wilderness. General Gage again denied his financial requests and told Sir William Johnson to spy on Rogers at his new post. Johnson was all too eager to undermine Rogers to maintain his own supreme position as the Crown's liaison with the Indians.

Rogers returned to New Hampshire to pick up his wife, and the couple began their long journey to Michilimackinac. They stopped at Sir William Johnson's home, west of Albany just north of the Mohawk River. They proceeded via Lake Ontario and Lake Erie to the fort located on the peninsula separating Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. Rogers did an excellent job managing the fort and dealing with both traders and Indians.

In September 1767, Gage and Johnson, armed with letters from Joseph Hopkins and Benjamin Roberts, falsely accused Rogers of treason. Rogers was arrested and clamped in irons. He and Betsey were taken to Detroit and later to Montreal for trial by court martial. Betsey, now carrying their child, went on to Boston to enlist support for her husband. In February 1769, their son Arthur was born. He was christened by his grandfather in Portsmouth.

Finally, in March, Rogers was acquitted by the court martial, but General Gage persisted in slandering him. During his tenure at Michilimackinac, Rogers had not been paid by Gage. Again Rogers sailed for England. Eventually he was allowed to receive his back pay, but Gage again blocked the payment of his military expenses. In October 1772, Rogers was put into Fleet Prison, London, at the

suit of his creditors. Filing under a new bankruptcy law, Rogers was released from Fleet Prison after twenty-two months, in August 1774. Finally, in the spring of 1775, he received his retirement pay, enough for passage to America. After six years of disappointment and failure, he sailed back to his native land, a broken man of forty-three bearing the marks of debtor's prison. He hoped to return to a quiet future with his wife and son.

Landing in America in September 1775, Robert Rogers knew little about the struggle for liberty. He was arrested in Philadelphia on suspicion of being a British spy, as he was a retired major in the British army on half pay. Because that was his only offense, he was released when he promised not to take up arms against America.

He visited his brother James en route to Portsmouth to be reunited with his wife and son. He left New Hampshire to pursue land grants. Rogers secretly applied for a commission from Congress, but members were suspicious of his motives. He was arrested again and General Washington examined him in person. Washington also suspected that Rogers was a British spy. There was no place for Robert Rogers in the American army. He escaped prison in July and ten days later offered his services to General Howe. Howe empowered Rogers to raise a battalion of rangers. Recruiting numbers of loyalists, he quickly filled the battalion ranks. The problem was that these recruits were farmers or merchants and scarcely knew one end of a gun from the other. British regulars looked down on the new "Rangers" with deserved contempt.

Rogers, now a lieutenant colonel, commanded and led the Queen's American Rangers until January 1777, when he was asked to retire. Rogers quietly stepped aside instead of complaining. He probably had little heart for combat against his American countrymen.

In January 1778, Elizabeth Rogers filed a petition for divorce, which was granted. In November that same year, the New Hampshire Legislature passed an act naming individuals, including Rogers, who were not to return to its soil. These two actions devastated him.

In April 1779, Sir Henry Clinton still had a desperate faith in Rogers and asked him to raise two battalions of King's Rangers.

His brother James was to be second in command. The recruits they expected to come pouring in from New England and Canada never came. Troubles with his officers in Quebec in December took Rogers away from the field. By now, Rogers was drinking, which only made matters worse.

Rogers probably left America in 1782 with the defeated British Army and returned to London a lonely, broken exile. He was in and out of debtor's prison. His last sad days were passed in Southwark, where his heavy drinking continued. Robert Rogers died May 18, 1795. He was buried in a churchyard next to the Elephant & Castle Inn, London, far away from his beloved Betsey and the green hills and fields of New Hampshire.

His legacy to lives on in the spirit of the U.S. Army Rangers.

Standing Orders, Rogers' Rangers

1. Don't forget nothing.
2. Have your musket clean as a whistle, hatchet scoured, sixty rounds powder and ball, and be ready to march at a minute's warning.
3. When you're on the march, act the way you would if you was sneaking up on a deer. See the enemy first.
4. Tell the truth about what you see and what you do. There is an army depending on us for correct information. You can lie all you please when you tell other folks about the Rangers, but don't ever lie to a Ranger or officer.
5. Don't never take a chance you don't have to.
6. When we're on the march we march single file, far enough apart so one shot can't go through two men.
7. If we strike swamps, or soft ground, we spread out abreast, so it's hard to track us.
8. When we march, we keep moving till dark, so as to give the enemy the least possible chance at us.
9. When we camp, half the party stays awake while the other half sleeps.
10. If we take prisoners, we keep 'em separate till we have had time to examine them, so they can't cook up a story between 'em.
11. Don't ever march home the same way. Take a different route so you won't be ambushed.
12. No matter whether we travel in big parties or little ones, each party has to keep a scout 20 yards ahead, 20 yards on each flank, and 20 yards in the rear so the main body can't be surprised and wiped out.

13. Every night you'll be told where to meet if surrounded by a superior force.
14. Don't sit down to eat without posting sentries.
15. Don't sleep beyond dawn. Dawn's when the French and Indians attack.
16. Don't cross a river by a regular ford.
17. If somebody's trailing you, make a circle, come back into your own tracks, and ambush the folks that aim to ambush you.
18. Don't stand up when the enemy's coming against you. Kneel down, lie down, hide behind a tree.
19. Let the enemy come till he's almost close enough to touch. Then let him have it and jump out and finish him up with your hatchet.

—MAJ Robert Rogers



THE AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR

1775–1781

SHORTLY AFTER THE END OF THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR, British statesmen of Britain found themselves with the problem of paying for that war which had left a national debt of 130 million pounds sterling. Another question was, who would pay for the ten-thousand British regulars garrisoned in North America? George Grenville's ministry reasoned that because the colonists would benefit most from the victory in Canada and on their frontiers, won for them by British arms, the colonists should pay. These ministers failed to recognize that in the course of these wars, some colonies had financed part of the campaigns as well as having furnished troops.

Soon the colonial merchants began to feel the pinch of the efforts of the English ministry to make up its financial deficit by the strict enforcement of the old Trade and Navigation Acts. Among these indignant colonial merchants were those of Portsmouth. Exasperated by the duties imposed upon them, the colonists resolved to renounce the use of every article of English manufacture or production. The *New Hampshire Gazette* urged the people "to dispense with superfluities, and practice economy for the sake of liberty and their country."

The Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts were as ill received in New Hampshire as they were in the rest of the colonies. Had England let the sleeping dog lie, the course of history might have been significantly different.