



Marietta's Mound Cemetery Memorial Day Ceremony
Marietta's Connections to the Boston Tea Party by
Scott A. Britton, Marietta Chapter SAR Historian

Marietta and Washington County became the final home of many Revolutionary War veterans who are among those we are honoring this Memorial Day weekend. This area has direct connections to virtually all of the major events in our nation's struggle for Independence... from a juror in the trial of the British soldiers who participated in the Boston Massacre in 1770, letter writers who protested and voiced their grievances to King George III and his parliament from the various "Committees of Correspondence", seven Ohio Company of Associates members who participated in the Gaspee Affair at Providence, Rhode Island in June 1772 that I discussed last year at this ceremony...the Boston Tea Party (which I discuss today)...all the way to the storming of Redoubt #10 to force the British surrender at Yorktown. It is that incredible legacy of patriotic service to our country that we are rightly honoring here again today.

Later this year on December 16th, America will mark the 250th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party, yet another overt act of rebellion in the American colonies against their British rulers. As most of you know, "taxation without representation" was a key issue for many of the American Colonists who took up fight. Tax after tax to refill the much-depleted British treasury following the French & Indian War continued to weigh heavily on the lives of those living in the thirteen colonies. In 1770, parliament repealed most of the Townshend Act taxes that had been so despised here, but the duties...the taxes...on tea...still remained. In 1773, many of the Americans finally resorted to a boycott of tea and vowed to no longer drink their favorite beverage. That protest was effective. Over 10,000 TONS of tea just sat in the warehouses of the East India Company in London.

The events that led to the Boston Tea Party began on Nov. 28, 1773, when a ship named the *Dartmouth* arrived at Griffin's Wharf in Boston with a new shipment of tea. The Sons of Liberty sent some of their members to the Wharf to prevent it

from being unloaded. Massachusetts Governor Thomas Hutchinson also refused to let the *Dartmouth* leave port without paying taxes for its cargo...which again, was not allowed to be unloaded. By law, the East India Company had twenty days to pay up, but they were at an impasse. Then to make a complicated and volatile situation even more explosive, two more ships, the full-rigged *Eleanor* and a whaling brig named the *Beaver* arrived on Dec. 2nd and 15th, respectively. The *Dorchester* and *Eleanor* both were loaded with 114 chests of tea, weighing about 350 pounds each. The *Beaver* carried 112 chests of tea, as well as fine Chippendale side chairs and other English furniture.

A series of meetings were held at the largest community meeting space in Boston, the Congregational Church's Old South Meeting House at Milk & Washington Streets. Among the patriots who were members of that church were Samuel Adams, Ben Franklin, and William Dawes. At the last meeting on Dec. 16th, the final deadline for payment by the *Dartmouth* was due, but the issue was still not resolved. Over 5,000 people were estimated to have been in attendance and the crowd was whipped into a frenzy by fiery speeches and protestations by many of Boston's most influential leaders. One of those Inciters at the church that night calling for the destruction of the tea, was none other than Boston merchant, John Rowe...the owner of one of those ships, the *Eleanor*. Rowe purportedly stated that night, "Perhaps salt water and tea will mix tonight."

The exact number of participants that took part in the actual act of the dumping of the tea into Boston Harbor are unknown, but it was estimated that it was in the hundreds. Because of fear of arrest, imprisonment, or worse, there are only 116 known documented participants. Of that group, sixteen were teenagers, but only nine were over the age of forty. However, literally thousands of Bostonians witnessed the now famous event. Dressed as Mohawk Indians with their faces painted to disguise themselves, a suggestion of Sarah (Bradlee) Fulton (aka the Mother of the Boston Tea Party), who was the wife of participant John Fulton and sister of two other participants, Nathaniel and Thomas Bradlee, the protestors boarded all three ships in the harbor and famously threw it all into the water.

In all, the Sons of Liberty destroyed about 46 tons...approximately 92,000 POUNDS...of tea. All of the chests were smashed open with axes and tomahawks, with the tea then being dumped overboard into the harbor. The total estimated loss in tea and cargo was about £10,000, about \$1.7 Million today. The only other

damage done, however, was just a single broken padlock on one of the ships, which was quickly replaced the next day.

In March 1774, British Parliament passed the Boston Port Act that closed the city to all commerce and ordered its citizens to pay very large fines for throwing that tea into the harbor. This act, along with others the British called the “Coercive Acts”...better known in America today as the “Intolerable Acts”...led to the organization and meeting of the First Continental Congress. Also, in retaliation for Boston Tea Party, during the occupation of the city during the early part of the Revolution, British officers used the Old South Meeting House where the Tea Party was organized for their stables. Pews were removed, the floor was covered with dirt, and horses were housed within the historic structure to allow the officers to practice riding indoors. The interior of that church was all but destroyed by the time they left Boston for good in March 1776.

Marietta had at least three known connections to this monumental event in our nation’s history: First, one of Marietta’s first pioneers, Colonel John May of Boston, participated as one of those who dumped the tea. Colonel May was born in Pomfret, CT in 1748, but lived most of his life in Boston. He served twenty years there as a fire warden as well as a Selectman from 1804 until his death in 1812. Col. May was a prominent merchant and shipper who owned a considerable amount of property in Boston, including Union Wharf (aka May’s Wharf). He was a documented member of the Sons of Liberty as early as the fall of 1769. During the Siege of Boston following the Battles of Lexington & Concord, May, his wife, and children returned to his native Pomfret. He served as Captain with the Boston militia in March 1777 and rose to the rank of full Colonel. During the Revolution, he saw action under French General Comte de Rochambeau in Rhode Island and received special commendation in a letter from Massachusetts Governor Bowdoin (pronounced BO-din) to Gen. George Washington. After the war, he also led his regiment in 1786 in helping to put down Shays’ Rebellion. Col. May owned 36 shares in the Ohio Company of Associates and participated in the meetings of that organization to plan the settlement of what became Marietta. He would leave Boston on April 14, 1788, just a week after the 48 pioneers landed on the banks of the Muskingum River here in Marietta. He would arrive here on May 26th, 1788 along with Lt. Oliver Rice and Walter Tufts. That summer Col. May built a house of hewed logs, the first of its kind in Marietta, converting the naturally round trees

into square-shaped logs with an axe or awl, for a much more finished and fancier look. His home was 36' long, 18' wide, and a full 15' high, that also included a cellar. May returned back to Boston later that year, but made a return trip to Marietta again the next spring. He wouldn't remain, however, returning home for good this time later that year. He would live out his remaining years with his wife and family in Boston. The two meticulously detailed daily journals he kept during his trips to Marietta and what he experienced during those two years here, are among the best documentation of day-to-day life in this new settlement. For what it's worth, his wife's steadfast opposition to moving to the frontier is cited as the principal reason for not remaining here in Marietta. Col. May died in 1812 and is buried in the Boston Common Burial Grounds.

The second Marietta connection is the great grandfather of Marietta's great Civil War hero, General Rufus R. Dawes. His ancestor William Dawes was a member of the old South Meeting House in Boston and had participated in the Boston Tea party. However, Dawes was best known for what occurred the next fall and the subsequent spring. Dawes had helped plan and lead an unbelievably daring breakin of the British armory on Boston Common in Oct. 1774 that smuggled two brass artillery pieces out of town to Waltham. It was these cannon that the British were desperately looking for when they entered the town of Concord and were attacked by the minutemen from the town and nearby communities. Dawes was best known though as the original midnight rider of the Revolution on April 18, 1775. After leaving on horseback by way of the Boston Neck, carrying an important message for John Hancock & Samuel Adams in Lexington, Dr. Joseph Warren summoned a backup rider about 30 minutes later to ensure the Dawes message got through...that rider, of course, was Paul Revere. Dawes set off about 9pm on a 17mile journey that took roughly 3.5 hours. Some sources have Dawes fighting at the Battle of Bunker Hill in Jun 1775. Like Col. May, Dawes also served with the Boston militia, attaining the rank of 2nd Major. He also served as a Quartermaster overseeing British prisoners captured at the Battle of Saratoga.

And finally, Rev. Daniel Story, the first officially hired minister of the Marietta settlement who was the first member to sign the covenant of the First Religious Society (known today as the First Congregational Church). A Dartmouth graduate from Boston, Rev. Daniel's brother, Dr. Elisha Story, was a well-known and documented participant in the Tea Party events. In addition, Joseph Story, Rev.

Daniel's nephew & Dr. Elisha's son, would become one of America's most famous early jurists. As a member of the US Supreme Court, Joseph authored a book called *Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States*, as well as authoring the majority decision that would free the enslaved men in the famous *Amistad* case.

As we approach the 250th Anniversary of the Boston Tea Party and the other anniversaries to come that marked various milestones in America's struggle for Independence, let us heed the words written on the monument in Oak Grove Cemetery just a few blocks from here that overlooks the graves of Gen. Varnum and other early Marietta pioneers, "Names pass away, but deeds live on." May God Bless our country and the patriots that have gone before us and those who continue to fight for our freedoms every day. Thank you!



Tea Party participant & Marietta pioneer, Colonel John May



Tea Party participant & Patriot Rider, Major William Dawes



Tea Party participant Dr. Elisha Story, brother of Marietta's Rev. Daniel Story



Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story, Dr. Elisha's son & Daniel's nephew