



## Good John Curtis

### Who Fought on Both Sides in the American Revolution

By Harlow D. Curtis

In Torrington, Connecticut in 1742, Capt. Allen Curtiss' wife, Ruth, gave birth to a little boy, John, for whom fate had a peculiar destiny. His older brothers Martin, Solomon and Elihu left home early, but John had his sister Chloe and Hannah and Ruth, and other brothers, Elisha and Seth, and his closest brother, Medad, two years his senior. His grandpa, David, was very religious and had gone to the Judea Society of Woodbury before John was born. In 1748 Capt. Allen Curtiss moved his family to Salisbury, CT, and the next year his wife died. Her marker is the oldest stone in Coleman's Station Cemetery near Amenia, New York. Whether John had a step-mother or not we do not know, but John married Deborah \_\_\_?\_\_\_ in 1763 and she gave him seven boys and no girls.

On May 8, 1775 John Curtis joined Capt. Abel Pettibone's Fourth Connecticut Regiment and served until Dec. 8, 1775. Afterwards, his brother Medad and he went north to Great Barrington, Massachusetts, in 1776, and, in 1779, Medad married Dinah Tracy in the old Episcopal Church there; but Medad soon joined the Shakers and got beaten up defending the person of their high priestess, Ann Lee, which fracas is vividly described by Carl Carmer in his book, *Listen for a Lonesome Drum: A York State Chronicle*, New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc. 1936.

When his new neighbors beat up his best be-loved brother, John was ready to retaliate. In the summer of 1776, one Solomon Curtis of Hillsdale, NY, was commissioned to arrest three Tories in Canaan, NY, exactly where John's brother Elihu and his wife Jerusha Wheeler lived. Now Solomon was no kin of John's - his mother was Elizabeth Selden who married Deodatus Curtis, fourth from the emigrant of that name through two Solomons. The three Tories were tried and sentenced to jail at Simsbury, but while Solomon was escorting them across Massachusetts, the party was set upon at Great Barrington by forty Tories and Solomon lost his prisoners, so he made a report to the authorities.

Now the people of Amenia, NY were the proprietors of Manchester, Vermont, and unlike most proprietors, they went to Manchester and settled. The last year John was in Amenia in 1775 he bought a piece of land in Manchester, Vermont, from Moses Soper of Amenia. In the fall of 1776, a John Curtiss shows up in Manchester, Vermont, with this deed and in the spring of 1777 he has crops in the ground, but somehow his enemies got wind of where he was and caught up with him so fast he had to leave in his nightshirt, losing his clothes, his watch, his farming tools and his crops in the ground, so he tells the Canadian Government in 1788 when he asks for land in Canada.

He said he joined up with British General Burgoyne in 1777 - doubtless he would have given his eyeteeth to get a pot-shot at those enemies of his who beat up Medad and ambushed him in the night - and he showed a document from Governor Chittenden of Vermont proving that his land had been confiscated.

Poor John! Little Lebbeus, his son who was born in Feb. 1777, he had never seen, and his wife Deborah had finally gotten married to someone else in 1782! From the ruin that fate and hate had wrought for him, he collected what he could. One by one his sons join him; Solomon, Amasa, Darius, Flavius Josephus, and Lebbeus, -- but John Jr., went to Pompey Hill, Onondaga Co., New York. and Asahel to Sauquoit Valley, Oneida Co., New York.

Many years later the children of his son Solomon wanted to collect some back-pension money due Solomon's widow Hannah Taylor, so the records at Washington reveal an astonishing lack of unanimity on John's death, but the idea uppermost in all the testimony seems to be that John died conveniently before he joined the British. One record has him taken off by camp fever at White Plains, another by yellow fever at Albany, still another states that he served in Massachusetts in the fall of 1778 - after he had died in the spring of the same year.

Evidently the Solomon Curtis of Hillsdale, who lost his Tory prisoners, further complicates the data and befuddles the disinterested clerks at Washington, for a very estimable lady living today (c.1940-1955) who is a descendant of Solomon Curtis of Hillsdale has gone smoothly into D.A.R. on Solomon who married Hannah Taylor and removed to Clarenceville, Quebec. Canada was neutral in the War of 1812. Solomon served as Justice of the Peace for Caldwell's Manor in 1817 and died there in Nov. 1826. John should laugh!

The 7 children of John and Deborah Curtis:

- Solomon Curtis b: 15 Jan 1764 in Falls Village, Litchfield County, CT.
- Asahel Curtis b: 23 Sep 1765 in Old Canaan, CT.
- Amasa Curtis b: 15 Nov 1767 in Falls Village, Litchfield County, CT.
- John Curtis b: 29 Mar 1770 d: 29 Jan 1858
- Darius Curtis b: 22 Jun 1772
- Flavius Josephus Curtis b: 17 Apr 1774 in CT or Amenia, NY
- Lebbeus Curtis b: 23 Feb 1777 in Great Barrington, MA.