

LEBBEUS BALL – Connections to Fame

Captain Lebbeus Ball served as head of a Granville militia comprised of 60 men in 1775, answering the alarm for Concord and Lexington by marching to Roxbury and encamping there. He built a reputation as an excellent soldier who continued serving the cause of the American Revolution from that point on to 1782 when he retired as a major. In 1776 the militia answered the call to march to Fort Ticonderoga with the intention of ensuring that the British would not retake it. He served under Washington at Valley Forge. He fought also at Saratoga where he was captured twice, escaped twice and where he was shot in the forehead by a musket ball that left him scarred.

It might seem that was enough interesting historical fact for one man's life. Now we can look back and see links to other histories that place, if you will, an aura around his. In the militia that he led to Roxbury was Lemuel Haynes, raised in West Granville, the first African American man to be ordained as a minister in this country. Haynes also was with him on the march to Ticonderoga. On that march Lemuel Haynes preached to the troops at Bennington, an event that was memorialized in a portrait painted of him that was kept for years on public display in the church. Reverend Haynes now has a firm place in the annals of American History.

Lebbeus Ball also had a connection to George Washington that was not from his service at Valley Forge. He was a third collateral cousin to Washington. Even though this is not a direct ancestry it is an interesting connection that was deemed of social value particularly in that day.

His most famous connection is to Winston Churchill. When Lebbeus Ball left Granville and moved to New York State his daughter Elizabeth married Aaron Jerome who was from a New York family. The wedding took place in Granville. After several generations their descendants produced a very wealthy heiress named Jennie. This was at a time when English aristocracy, falling on hard financial times, sometimes looked for financial salvation in the form of a wealthy American heiress. Jennie fit the bill, not only rich but beautiful and socially adept. She married Randolph Churchill, who was descended from the Duke of Marlborough, and the result was the birth of Winston. When we see a photo or movies of Winston Churchill speaking to the British people during WWII, urging them on to having faith in themselves and each other, we can say to ourselves that we see in him a reflection of Lebbeus Ball, a Revolutionary War hero who was Jennie Jerome's great great-grandfather.

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