

The Life of General Andrew Pepperell Fernald

February 20, 1753 – May 18, 1821

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May 30, 2011

We are here today to remember an important early citizen of our town. What follows is a summary of the life of this man. The record of local men of this time period is sparse, and the pages of General Fernald's diary have been elusive, but I have endeavored to create a narrative based on prior studies that have appeared in the publications of "Old Eliot" as well as genealogical investigation, and research of original military records from the Massachusetts State Archives.

The purposeful life of General Andrew Pepperell Fernald began on February 20, 1753. He was born the son of Dennis Fernald and Sarah Frost in a large new home built by his father on 50 acres of land that his mother Sarah received as a dowry from her father, Charles Frost III. The process of understanding our ancestors is made easier by an understanding of their ancestors. Andrew Pepperell Fernald's ancestry reads like an early history of the Piscataqua region. He was named for his maternal Great-Grandfather, Andrew Pepperell, the oldest son of Sir William Pepperell Sr. of Kittery. Andrew Pepperell's younger brother William also became Sir William Pepperell and was best known for his success in the Siege of Louisbourg in 1745, which was the capture of the French Fort at modern day Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, during King George's War. The Pepperell name was revered in Maine,

and many descendents carried the name as an honor to this ancestral tie. Andrew Pepperell married Jane Eliot of Newcastle, NH, the daughter of Robert Eliot who is claimed to be one of the two possible sources for the name of our town of Eliot, as Andrew P. Fernald was the most instrumental character in the Incorporation of Eliot in 1810. General Fernald's mother, Sarah Frost, was the daughter of Charles Frost III, the grandson of the famous Major Charles Frost who was killed in an Indian ambush at Ambush Rock in 1697. Andrew P. Fernald's paternal great-great grandfather, Dr. Renald Fernald, was the first Fernald as well as the first doctor in the Piscataqua region. Dr. Fernald arrived in NH in 1630 aboard the ship Warwick and settled on "Doctor's Island" in Portsmouth Harbor, today known as Pierce Island. Renald's son William, the General's great grandfather, owned land on what is today the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. It was at one time two islands first known as the Puddington Islands, next called Fernald Islands when William's brother, Thomas, purchased them. William purchased one of these islands from Thomas and it was known as "Lay Claim" Island.

Andrew P. Fernald was the oldest child of 8 children. His older brother Dennis died at 3 ½ years old when Andrew was only 2. His sister Miriam married the prominent merchant William Leighton and produced a large family of industrious and successful Leightons who contributed greatly to our town and produced the ancestral line of Governor John F. Hill, Eliot's native son and the 45th Governor of Maine. By the time Andrew P. Fernald was 21 years old he had learned the tanning and currier trade and was in business for himself as a tanner and currier. Tanning was the process of preparing animal hides to make leather products. It was a smelly and hazardous job. It was also a long process as animal hides would sit and dry for two or three years before they were ready for the currier. The currier would prepare the leather for whatever the final product would be, whether shoes or harnesses, or even book covers. The location of Andrew P. Fernald's tanning business became known as Tan Pit Hill and was located near the bottom of the hill on Beech Ridge Road where it intersects with Goodwin Road, just a short walk from here. The location was still marked as a tannery on the 1856 map of York County.

The events of the American Revolution played a large part in the lives of many of those of General Fernald's generation. Many brothers, cousins, and other neighbors served in some capacity either on land or at sea. Most were part of the state militias. They formed local companies and served with friends, cousins, uncles and other men whom they knew very well from the parish and surrounding towns. Most active service commitments were not long engagements as the demands of the farm and family weighed heavily on their minds. Many times, the service of the state militias did not exceed three or six months. On April 30, 1776 Andrew P. Fernald was appointed as Adjutant of the 2nd York County Regiment of the Massachusetts State Militia upon the recommendation of Colonel John Frost and Major John Shapleigh who described him in their appointment request as an "able and skillful person". On January 9, 1777 Adjutant Andrew P. Fernald marched with Colonel John Frost's 2nd York County Regiment which was reinforcing the Continental Army for three months during their winter camp along the Hudson River north of New York City. General Washington's troops had forced the British and Hessian troops back into defensive positions in and around New York City after recent victories in Trenton and Princeton, NJ, the former including Washington's famed "Crossing of the Delaware". The duties of the Regimental Adjutant involved communicating to all the subordinate companies, the orders given from the Brigade Commander to the Regimental commanders, as well as taking care of the logistical needs of the subordinate companies to ensure that the men were properly equipped and supplied to carry out the orders. Colonel John Frost probably recognized these skills in Andrew P. Fernald as he was already established as a successful tanner and currier which required great planning and administrative skills. During movements between camps, Colonel Frost's Regiment provided front, rear, and flank guards for the marching column. On one such march from January 18th – 21st 1777, there was sporadic fighting with British and Hessian forces at King's Bridge, NY, but most of those three months were spent in the day to day drudgery of winter camp life. In March of 1777 Andrew P. Fernald

and the rest of the men under Colonel Frost's Regiment were honorably discharged and marched back to Kittery to continue their former lives as farmers, merchants, and tanners.

While home from his first war adventures and as the American Revolution marched on, Andrew P. Fernald married Martha Shapleigh, the daughter of John Shapleigh and Abigail Bartlett, on Christmas Eve of 1778. Martha was previously engaged to Andrew's brother Charles a year earlier but, tragically, he died two months later. Andrew and Martha's first son, Charles, born in November 1779, was perhaps named in honor of his deceased brother. After a three year break, the events of the American Revolution called Andrew P. Fernald back to duty as he was promoted to Captain in the 2nd York County Regiment on June 23, 1780 and ordered into active service on July 6, 1780 to command a company of Massachusetts State troops along the Hudson River north of New York City. Once again the British forces and their Hessian allies had been defeated in their attempts to break out of New York at the Battle of Springfield in New Jersey and were contained within the city of New York and Staten Island. The overall control of the forces in this region of the Hudson River Valley north of New York, including those of Captain Andrew P. Fernald, fell to an American general who had proven his courage, bravery, and resourcefulness in prior battles of the American Revolution: General Benedict Arnold. Yes, Captain Andrew P. Fernald and his men came very close to being betrayed by the treacherous plotting of America's most famous traitor. Captain Fernald was discharged on September 22, 1780 and began a 300 mile return march to Kittery, precisely one day before Benedict Arnold's plot to surrender West Point was exposed. Andrew Pepperell Fernald's American Revolution was over.

After the end of the American Revolution, the veterans of that momentous fight returned home. Some returned to the affairs of the farm, family and church, living out mostly private lives without leaving much further public record. Andrew P. Fernald did not choose that path. He was 30 years old as the war ended. He turned his attention to farming, his tanning business, growing his family, and keeping

active in the State Militia. He added four more children to his family from 1781 to 1800, having lost a son and his first namesake, Andrew, at age two in 1787, and a daughter Sarah, at age three in 1791. He also began the first introductory steps in a remarkable life of public service. Andrew P. Fernald's name begins to appear in the meeting notes of the Upper Parish in March of 1785 when he was appointed to a committee with Nathaniel Rogers and John Fogg to assess the value of the parish lands and parsonage. In 1788 and 1789 his name appears on committees to place school masters in the parish schools. In 1789 and 1790 he was appointed to a committee to settle the parish treasury. By 1791, at age 38, Andrew P. Fernald was the Upper Parish's choice to serve as moderator of parish meetings. His public service also included his appointment as Town Clerk from 1791 to 1800. In this endeavor he was carrying on the family tradition as he took over the job from his father Dennis who, himself, had followed in the footsteps of Andrew's Grandfather Tobias Fernald who served as Town Clerk for fourteen years. Andrew P. Fernald also served as Selectman from 1793 to 1796. He served as a Representative to the Massachusetts General Court from 1799 to 1800 and although not formally trained as a lawyer, Andrew P. Fernald Esq. served for seven years as Justice of the Peace. The home of General Fernald became the location of the Kittery Social Library until 1817 when it was moved to the home of William Fogg. Proprietors could stop in and check out the various books of the age. There were 141 books in the collection at the time the library was moved to William Fogg's home on Old Road. By 1823 this library was moved to Andrew Leighton's home on River Road.

After his service during the Revolutionary War, Andrew P. Fernald continued to serve with the York County Militia. His career rise in the militia mirrored the rise in his personal and public life. He was promoted to Lt. Colonel and commander of the 2nd York County Regiment at age 36 on October 1, 1789. Almost eleven years later on May 4, 1800 he was appointed Brigadier General and commander of the 1st York County Brigade, 6th Division of the Massachusetts State Militia. And thus he was known for the

remainder of his life as "General". He held this command until his discharge from the Militia on September 2, 1806 after 30 years of honorable service in the State Militia.

Of all the accomplishments of General Andrew P. Fernald's life, probably the most significant in the minds of generations of Eliot inhabitants, was his work on the Incorporation of the town of Eliot in 1810. For it was almost entirely his persuasive argument that convinced the majority of the inhabitants of the Upper Parish of Kittery to send him, along with Captain Elisha Shapleigh to Boston to persuade the General Court to vote in favor of our separation from Kittery. General Fernald actually lived closer to the Middle Parish of Kittery, but held strong ties with the Upper Parish and its Meeting House located on River Road, requiring an almost five mile ride from his home to attend parish meetings. The Incorporation was nearly a year long process and it was not without its acrimony as not all of the inhabitants of the Upper Parish were in favor of separation. But his force of argument and strong personality carried the day as the Massachusetts Court agreed to the separation, making it official on March 1, 1810.

General Fernald lost his mother Sarah in 1804 and his father Dennis in 1805. He took over control of the estate and continued his life of farming and tanning. As late as 1818 the diary of Andrew P. Fernald describes his daily notes of life on the farm and tannery, and the various legal services he performed for his friends and neighbors. On November 26, 1819, after almost 41 years of marriage, Andrew's wife, Martha died at age 59. General Andrew Pepperell Fernald followed his wife into eternity a year and a half later on May 18, 1821 at the age of 68, and thus ended the worthy life of an important man.

His estate passed down to his son Andrew who died at the young age of 31 in 1826. Andrew's widow, Mary Ann, remarried four years later to Dr. Oliver Jones, and thus, for a period, the Fernald estate became the Jones homestead. When Dr. Jones died in 1865 the farm passed down to General

Fernald's grandson, Andrew P. Fernald II. The original house where General Fernald was born was taken down in 1869. Andrew P. Fernald II lived a long and productive life, passing away in 1917 at the age of 92. His son, William P. Fernald, took over the farm and following the example set by his father, lived a long and useful life, passing away in 1964 at the age of 95.

We remember General Andrew Pepperell Fernald and his legacy today, and hope the dedication of his grave marker will help to preserve his memory for future generations of his descendants as well as the citizens of the town he played such an important role in creating.