

# Researching American Revolutionary War Patriots

## *Class 5: Compiling Patriot Stories*

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Compiling your ancestor's story will require far more than just military records. In order to create a complete and comprehensive work for your ancestor, you will need to combine both military and vital records. By comparing and contrasting a variety of records, you will be able to establish a detailed story of your ancestor's life, and better understand the time in which they lived.

### Compiling Military Records

1. Research the Regiment
2. Muster Rolls
  - a. Compare the muster rolls to the information found by researching the regiment and to the declarations made in Pension records.
3. Land Bounty/Pension Records
4. Prior and Future Service

### Utilizing Vital Records

1. Vital Records
  - a. Although they may seem basic, Vital Records are of course one of the greatest sources a researcher can use. To truly bring together the full story of your ancestor, vital records will serve as the foundation for your research.
2. Alternative Vital Records
  - a. This could include, but is not limited to, Bible Records, Church Records, Will/Probate, Census Records, Gravestones, Deeds/Land Records,
3. Artifacts and Paintings

### Adopt the Regiment

1. Why Adopt the Regiment
  - a. Adopting the Regiment allows a researcher to learn more about the regiment itself and possibly more about your ancestor.
  - b. Your ancestor is just a small piece of the puzzle, and their fellow soldiers may have kept a journal, written letters, or applied for a pension, when your ancestor did not.
2. Determine the chain of command: Colonel, Commander, Captain, Lieutenant, etc.
3. Explore Muster Rolls, Crew Lists, Pension Records, Letters and Correspondence
  - a. Officers can be your greatest source of information. They were likely the ones who kept journals, maintained steady correspondence, etc. Additionally, searching through pension



records for a regiment will provide a more robust overview of their movements and actions.

4. Organize your research.
  - a. When researching an entire Regiment compared to an individual, the need to keep information for each soldier organized is vital. A spread sheet is one of the easiest ways to manage, using columns and rows to separate vital records, military records, and citations for each soldier.

## Tips

1. Cite as you write
2. Make a Timeline
3. Include and Explain Discrepancies
4. Explore Vital Records of Siblings and Spouses

## Optional Sketch Template

(see sample sketch below)

*MILITARY ABSTRACT:* Rank, Regiment, Year.

*BIRTH:* Birthplace, Date, parents, [mother's parents].<sup>1</sup>

*MARRIAGE:* Marriage Location, Date, **Wife's Name**, wife's birthplace, date, parents, death location, date.

*DEATH:* Death Location, Date

*CHILDREN:* with **Wife:**

- i. Child's Name, Birth Location, Date; Death Location, Date; Marriage Location, Date, Spouse's Name, Spouse's Birth Location, Date, parents, Death Location, Date.<sup>2</sup>

*BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:*

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<sup>1</sup> *Stamford Vital Records 1641 – 1852*, in Barbour Collection of Connecticut Vital Records (Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Genealogical Society, 1949), [1: 61-62], citing original town record, vol. 1, p. 94, 129.; *Windham Vital Records 1692–1850*, in Barbour Collection of Connecticut Vital Records (Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Genealogical Society, 1949), [1: 188-189], citing original town record, vol. 1 p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> *Stamford Vital Records*, vol. 2, p. 66.; Davenport, *Genealogy of the Davenport Family*, 249.; *Massachusetts, U.S., Death Records, 1841-1915*, Ancestry.com, Pre 1903, 1863, p. 547.; *Boston, MA: Inhabitants and Estates of the Town of Boston, 1630-1822 (Thwing Collection)*, AmericanAncestors.org, p. 1779.; *Boston, MA: Births, 1700-1800*, AmericanAncestors.org, p. 326.



## Resources List

Franklin Bowditch Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College with Annals of the College History* (New York, N.Y.: Henry Holt and Company, 1903).

Francis Bernard Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army During the War of the Revolution, April 1775 to December 1783* (Washington, D.C.: Rare Book Shop Publishing Co., 1914).

Henry B. Hoff and Penny Stratton, *Guide to Genealogical Writing* (Boston, Mass.: American Ancestors, 2014).

Charles H. Lewis, *Cut Off: Colonel Jedediah Huntington's 17<sup>th</sup> Continental (Conn.) Regiment at the Battle of Long Island August 27, 1776* (Westminster, Md.: Heritage Books, 2009)

Henry Phelps Johnston, *Record of Service of Connecticut Men in the I. War of the Revolution, II. War of 1812, III. Mexican War* (Hartford, Conn.: Connecticut Adjutant-General's Office, Connecticut General Assembly, 1889).

Henry Phelps Johnston, *Yale and Her Honor Roll in the American Revolution* (New York, N.Y.: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1888).

Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Evidence! Citation & Analysis for the Family Historian* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1997).

J. Michael Phelps, ed., *Biographies of Original Members and Qualifying Officers - Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Connecticut* (Boston, Mass.: American Ancestors, 2023).

Clifford K. Shipton, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates, Vol. SIV, 1756-1760, Biographical Sketches of Those Who Attended Harvard College in the Classes of 1756-1760* (Boston, Mass.: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1968).

Writing & Publishing Your Family History Research Guide:

<https://www.americanancestors.org/tools/research-guides>

## Popular Revolutionary War Lineage Societies

National Society Daughters of the American Revolution - [dar.org/natsociety](http://dar.org/natsociety)

National Society Sons of the American Revolution - [sar.org](http://sar.org)

Sons of the Revolution - [sr1776.org](http://sr1776.org)

Society of the Descendants of Washington's Army at Valley Forge - [valleyforgesociety.com](http://valleyforgesociety.com)

The Society of the Cincinnati - [societyofthecincinnati.org](http://societyofthecincinnati.org)

Order of Founders and Patriots of America - [ofpa.org](http://ofpa.org)



## THOMAS PHELPS

**QUALIFICATION:** Three Campaigns

**MILITARY ABSTRACT:** Prior Service: Sergeant, 2nd Connecticut Continental Regiment, 4 May 1775 – 8 Nov. 1775;<sup>1</sup> Qualifying Service: Ensign, 22nd Connecticut Continental Regiment, 9 Nov. 1775<sup>2</sup> – 31 Dec. 1776;<sup>3</sup> Lieutenant, Captain Jeduthan Baldwin's Artillery Artificer Regiment, 24 July 1777;<sup>4</sup> Resigned, 1 May 1779.<sup>5</sup>

**BIRTH:** Hartford, Hartford County, Connecticut 17 July 1741, son of Thomas Phelps and Margaret Watson. Margaret Watson was a daughter of John Watson and Sarah Steele.<sup>6</sup> Through his mother, Lieutenant Thomas Phelps was a first cousin of Captain James Watson (1750–1806), an Original Member of the Connecticut Society of the Cincinnati, and a first cousin of Captain Titus Watson (1743–1820), a Qualified Propositus of the Connecticut Society of the Cincinnati under the Rule of 1854.

**MARRIAGE:** Simsbury, Hartford County to **DOROTHY LAMB WOODBRIDGE**, who was born at Simsbury 13 Nov. 1745, daughter of Haynes Woodbridge and Elizabeth Griswold,<sup>7</sup> and died Simsbury 1792, at the age of 46.<sup>8</sup> Dorothy

<sup>1</sup> Henry Phelps Johnston, *Record of Service of Connecticut Men in the I. War of the Revolution, II. War of 1812, III. Mexican War* (Hartford, Conn.: Connecticut Adjutant-General's Office, Connecticut General Assembly, 1889), 45, 49; Francis Bernard Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army During the War of the Revolution, April 1775 to December 1783* (Washington, D.C.: Rare Book Shop Publishing Co., 1914), 439.

<sup>2</sup> "22nd Regiment" *Revolutionary War Rolls compiled 1894–1913, documenting the period 1775–1783*, Folder 98, Fold3.com, 4; "Phelps, Thomas: 22nd Cont." *Compiled Service Records of Soldiers Who Served in the American Army During the Revolutionary War, compiled 1894–ca. 1912, documenting the period 1775–1784* (NARA: M881), Roll 0056, Record Group 93, Fold3.com, 2 shows that he was serving as an Ensign in that regiment as of 9 Nov. 1775 while serving at Roxbury, Massachusetts at the Siege of Boston.

<sup>3</sup> Johnston, *Record of Service of Connecticut Men*, 107; Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army*, 439.

<sup>4</sup> Johnston, *Record of Service of Connecticut Men*, 289, 290; Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army*, 439.

<sup>5</sup> Johnston, *Record of Service of Connecticut Men*, 290; Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army*, 439.

<sup>6</sup> Hartford Vital Records, 1635–1855, *Barbour Collection*, Ancestry.com, Vol. FFS, pp. 29, 62, 82.

<sup>7</sup> Simsbury Vital Records, 1670–1855, *Barbour Collection*, AmericanAncestors.org, Vol. TM3, pp. 153, 197; Albert C. Bates, *Simsbury, Connecticut: Births Marriages and Deaths Transcribed from the Town Records* (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1898), 60, 94; Oliver Seymour Phelps and Andrew T. Servin, *The Phelps Family of America and their English Ancestors, with Copies of Wills, Deeds, Letters, and other Interesting Papers, Coats of Arms and Valuable Records* (Pittsfield, Mass.: Eagle Publishing Company, 1899), Vol. II, pp. 318, 1354.

<sup>8</sup> Connecticut Headstone Inscriptions, *Connecticut, Hale Collection of Cemetery Inscriptions and Newspaper Notices, 1629–1934*, Ancestry.com, Vol. 44, p. 47; Grave of Dorothy Lamb



Lamb Woodbridge was the sister of Lieutenant Theophilus Woodbridge (1754–1815), a Qualified Propositus of the Connecticut Society of the Cincinnati under the Rule of 1854. She was also a first cousin of Major Theodore Woodbridge (1748–1810), an Original Member of the Connecticut Society, and a second cousin of Major John Palsgrave Wyllys (1754–1790) and Colonel Samuel Wyllys (1738–1823), each an Original Member of the Connecticut Society of the Cincinnati..

**DEATH:** Simsbury 28 Feb. 1789, at the age of 47. Both Thomas and Dorothy Phelps were buried in Hop Meadow Cemetery at Simsbury.<sup>9</sup>

**CHILDREN:** all born at Simsbury:<sup>10</sup>

- i. WILLIAM "BILLY" HAYNES PHELPS, b. 24 Aug. 1767; d. unknown.
- ii. GEORGE AUGUSTUS PHELPS, b. 12 Nov. 1769; d. 15 July 1788, at the age of 18; bur. Hop Meadow Cemetery.<sup>11</sup>
- iii. THOMAS WOODBRIDGE PHELPS, b. 6 May 1772; d. Lenox, Madison Co., N.Y. 5 Sept. 1838, at the age of 66; bur. Lenox Rural Cemetery, Lenox;<sup>12</sup> m. (1) LIBERTY EVEREST, b. abt. 1775, d. Canton, Hartford Co. 13 June 1796, at the age of 21, bur. Dyer Cemetery, Canton;<sup>13</sup> (2) LUCINA PINNEY, b. abt. 1774, d. Lenox 15 May 1819, at the age of 46, bur. Lenox Rural Cemetery;<sup>14</sup> (3) SARAH \_\_\_\_\_, b. 1769, d. Ansonia, New Haven Co., Conn. 1860, at the age of abt. 91, bur. Pine Grove Cemetery, Ansonia. Thomas was a saddler and a harness-maker.<sup>15</sup>
- iv. ANSON GREENE PHELPS, b. 24 March 1781; d. New York City, N.Y. 30 Nov. 1853, at the age of 72;<sup>16</sup> m. Hartford 26 Oct. 1806, OLIVIA EGLESTON, b. Conn. 30 March 1784, dau. of Elihu Eggleston and Elizabeth Olcott, d. New York City 24 April 1859, at the age of 75. His middle name was chosen in honor of Nathanael Greene, whom his father greatly admired. Anson was a founder of Ansonia, Conn., and a successful manufacturer and merchant of Hartford and New York. Both Anson and Olivia were buried first in New York Marble Cemetery, Manhattan, and were later moved to the family mausoleum at Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn, N.Y.<sup>17</sup>

Woodbridge Phelps, FindaGrave.com, memorial #60405990.

<sup>9</sup> Connecticut Headstone Inscriptions, Vol. 44, p. 47; Grave of Thomas Phelps, FindaGrave.com, memorial #57496260; Phelps and Servin, *The Phelps Family of America*, 1354.

<sup>10</sup> *Simsbury Vital Records*, Vol. TM4, p. 207; Bates, *Simsbury, Connecticut: Births Marriages and Deaths*, 208; Phelps and Servin, *The Phelps Family of America*, 1354.

<sup>11</sup> Connecticut Headstone Inscriptions, Vol. 44, p. 47; Grave of George Augustus Phelps, FindaGrave.com, memorial #60406943.

<sup>12</sup> Grave of Col. Thomas Woodbridge Phelps, FindaGrave.com, memorial #24426597; Phelps and Servin, *The Phelps Family of America*, 1408, 1409.

<sup>13</sup> Connecticut Headstone Inscriptions Vol. 08, p. 161; Grave of Liberty Everest Phelps, FindaGrave.com, memorial #83080128; Phelps and Servin, *The Phelps Family of America*, 1408.

<sup>14</sup> Grave of Lucina Pinney Phelps, FindaGrave.com, memorial #24426598; Phelps and Servin, *The Phelps Family of America*, 1408.

<sup>15</sup> Grave of Sarah Phelps, FindaGrave.com, memorial #151494115.

<sup>16</sup> Grave of Anson Greene Phelps, FindaGrave.com, memorial #180317406; Phelps and Servin, *The Phelps Family of America*, 1409–1410.

<sup>17</sup> *Newspaper Extractions from the Northeast, 1704–1930*, Connecticut American Mercury Marriage 1784–1822, Ancestry.com, 96; Grave of Liberty Everest Phelps, FindaGrave.com,



**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:** Thomas Phelps was born 17 July 1741 at Hartford, the son of Thomas Phelps and Margaret Watson. The family purchased parcels of land at Simsbury and lived in a house on the hill there, situated south of the old burying ground.<sup>18</sup> Thomas Phelps's father died at Simsbury 25 Sept. 1777. In his will, dated 7 Aug. 1777, he bequeathed to his namesake son "One half of my land at a place called Windsor in the County of Cumberland of States of New York together with what I have already given him," and equal shares with his sisters in "all the Right Title and Interest I have in Windsor and East Windsor in the Coun[ty] of Hartford [and] all my right in the lands in the purchase called Delaware Lying in North America."<sup>19</sup> The Propositus chose to remain at Simsbury.

On 4 May 1775, shortly after the Lexington Alarm, Thomas Phelps was actively involved in the construction activity at Newgate Prison, located at Simsbury. He was appointed by the Connecticut General Assembly in the Public Records of 11 May 1775, and was paid "£1 2s 9d." for his work.<sup>20</sup> Earlier minutes for the Assembly held at Hartford between 12–29 Jan. 1774 reveal that Newgate's overseers had been "directed and empowered to cause the east shaft of said prison to be effectually secured with stone or iron, at their discretion, and to cause a log-house to be built and to consist of two or three rooms, one of which to be directly over the west shaft of said prison; taking care to preserve a free communication of air," following a prisoner escape through that shaft, abetted by outside aid.<sup>21</sup> An extended, though inexact, genealogy of *The Phelps Family of America* records that "For a time he owned one-half the saw and grist mill in Hop Meadow, Simsbury," which would explain his importance to the project.<sup>22</sup>

On 4 May 1775, not long after the Lexington Alarm, Thomas Phelps commenced his military service as a Sergeant in the 2nd Connecticut Continental Regiment commanded by Colonel Joseph Spencer, serving at the Siege of Boston.<sup>23</sup> By 9 Nov. 1775, he received a commission as an Ensign in the 22nd Connecticut Continental Regiment, commanded by Colonel Samuel Wyllys.<sup>24</sup> Ensign Phelps was stationed at Roxbury Camp and was also recorded in a Return of Officers recommended for Commissions in Brigadier Spencer's Brigade on 28 Jan. 1776.<sup>25</sup>

memorial #83080128; Grave of Olivia Egleston Phelps, FindaGrave.com, memorial #8115922; Phelps and Servin, *The Phelps Family of America*, 1410.

<sup>18</sup> Phelps and Servin, *The Phelps Family of America*, 1317.

<sup>19</sup> *Connecticut, Wills and Probate Records, 1609–1999*, Hartford, Probate Packets, Job–Read, Rosewell, 1769–1880, Ancestry.com, 517.

<sup>20</sup> Charles J. Hoadly, *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, From May, 1775, to June, 1776, inclusive* (Hartford: Press of The Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1890), 1, 52.

<sup>21</sup> Charles J. Hoadly, *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, From October, 1772, to April, 1775, inclusive* (Hartford: Press of The Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1887), 213, 220.

<sup>22</sup> Phelps and Servin, *The Phelps Family of America*, 1354.

<sup>23</sup> Johnston, *Record of Service of Connecticut Men*, 45, 49; Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army*, 439.

<sup>24</sup> "Phelps, Thomas: 22nd Cont." *Compiled Service Records*, 2.

<sup>25</sup> "Phelps, Thomas: 22nd Cont." *Compiled Service Records*, 2–3.



As of 1 Jan. 1776, Ensign Thomas Phelps remained stationed at the Siege of Boston in Colonel Wylls's 22nd Regiment. After the British evacuated Boston in late March 1776, the 22nd Regiment was ordered to march to New York City to assist in constructing defensive fortifications to prepare for an expected British attack there.<sup>26</sup> On 24 Aug. 1776, the regiment was ordered to the front lines in Brooklyn, and three days later engaged in the Battle of Long Island.<sup>27</sup> After the stinging defeat suffered by the Continental Army on 27 Aug. 1776, the 22nd Regiment retreated from New York with the rest of the army. It then was present at the Battle of White Plains 28 Oct. 1776, after which it remained in the vicinity of Peekskill, New York until the expiration of its term 31 Dec. 1776.<sup>28</sup>

The next record of military service for Thomas Phelps occurred on 24 July 1777, when he was commissioned as a Lieutenant in Captain Jeduthan Baldwin's Artillery Artificer Regiment.<sup>29</sup> His occupational background as a sawmiller likely made him a valuable addition to a troop comprised of skilled mechanics. According to the wartime journal written by Colonel Baldwin, his Artificer Regiment was engaged in the fighting at the Battle of Saratoga 19 Sept. 1777, also known as the Battle of Freeman's Farm, and then engaged in the Battle of Bemis Heights on 7 Oct. 1777.<sup>30</sup> Baldwin's journal shows that his Artificer Regiment arrived at Stillwater, New York 9 Sept. 1777,<sup>31</sup> that it was present at the surrender of British General John Burgoyne, and remained there until General Burgoyne and the other defeated British officers left town.<sup>32</sup> After the winter of 1777–1778 spent likely at Valley Forge with the rest of the Continental Army, Baldwin's Artificer Regiment then was present at the Battle of Monmouth 28 June 1778.<sup>33</sup>

Lieutenant Thomas Phelps resigned his commission 1 May 1779.<sup>34</sup> No reason for the resignation is stated in his service file, so one can only speculate whether it was caused by a health problem he or a member of his family was experiencing, possibly financial pressures, or displeasure in his military career.

<sup>26</sup> Johnston, *Record of Service of Connecticut Men*, 107.

<sup>27</sup> Johnston, *Record of Service of Connecticut Men*, 107.

<sup>28</sup> Johnston, *Record of Service of Connecticut Men*, 107.

<sup>29</sup> Johnston, *Record of Service of Connecticut Men*, 289, 290; Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army*, 439; "Phelps, Thomas: Baldwin's Artificer Regt." *Compiled Service Records of Soldiers Who Served in the American Army During the Revolutionary War, compiled 1894–ca. 1912, documenting the period 1775–1784* (NARA: M881), Roll 0064, Record Group 93, Fold3.com, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Williams Baldwin, Ed., *The Revolutionary Journal of Col. Jeduthan Baldwin, 1775–1778* (Bangor, Maine, De Burians, 1906), 118–126.

<sup>31</sup> Baldwin, Ed., *The Revolutionary Journal*, 119.

<sup>32</sup> Baldwin, Ed., *The Revolutionary Journal*, 126.

<sup>33</sup> Johnston, *Record of Service of Connecticut Men*, 289. Although Johnston also asserts that the regiment was present at the Battle of Brandywine (11 Sept. 1777) and the Battle of Germantown (4 Oct. 1777), that could not be true since we know from Baldwin's Journal that the regiment was at Saratoga at the time of those other two battles.

<sup>34</sup> Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army*, 439; Johnston, *Record of Service of Connecticut Men*, 289–290.



After resigning his commission in Baldwin's Artillery Artificer Regiment, Thomas Phelps continued to serve in matters pertaining to the war effort. In 1780 he "was engaged in rebuilding the block-house at Newgate Prison, perhaps continued work there until 1784."<sup>35</sup> Since he was doing this same work as a civilian prior to the war, it seems likely that he also was doing the same after his resignation from the Artificer Regiment. This work, as laudable as it may have been, does not appear to qualify as service of a commissioned officer for purposes of the Society of the Cincinnati.

Lieutenant Thomas Phelps never joined the Society of the Cincinnati as an Original Member, and it is not entirely clear that he qualifies under the Rule of 1854, because he may have had slightly less than three years of service as a commissioned officer in the Connecticut Continental Line. However, since he served as a commissioned officer at the Siege of Boston in 1775–1776; the Battle of Long Island, 27 Aug. 1776; the Battles of Saratoga, 19 Sept. 1777 and 7 Oct. 1777; and the Battle of Monmouth 28 June 1778, he clearly qualifies under the Three Campaigns Rule, which the Original Members of the Connecticut Society adopted in July 1784.

After the war, Thomas returned to his hometown, and died at Simsbury on 28 Feb. 1789, at the age of 47. He was buried there in Hop Meadow Cemetery next to his son George Augustus, who had died seven months before, and with whom he shares a gravestone. His wife Dorothy was interred beside them only three years later, at the age of 45.

Lieutenant Thomas Phelps was a third cousin of three Qualified Propositi of the Connecticut Society of the Cincinnati: Lieutenant Noah Phelps (1753–1778), who Died in Service, Captain Seth Phelps (1746–1826), an Original Member, and Commissary Elisha Phelps (1737–1776), who Died in Service.

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<sup>35</sup> Henry Reed Stiles, *The History and Genealogies of Ancient Windsor, Connecticut* (1892), Vol. II, p. 600; Phelps and Servin, *The Phelps Family of America*, 1354.

