

Method for Compiling Americans in the Battle of Breed's Hill from the Rolls

Introduction

This document describes the methods used to compile “Americans in the Battle of Breed’s Hill from the Rolls” (ABBHR). The ABBHR is a spreadsheet containing a roster of the American soldiers who were in or had a high probability of being in the Battle of Breed’s Hill on June 17, 1775. First, however, there are several points to make regarding the compiling this roll. Foremost among these is to define what the ABBHR is and is not.

The ABBHR is a twenty-first century digital compilation that originates from scans of printed nineteenth century transcriptions of eighteenth-century documents--many of which no longer exist. As a twenty-first century digital document, the ABBHR is not expected to be static, instead it is intended to be improved whenever new information is brought forward. The initial version of the ABBHR contains, as an educated guess, between ninety and ninety-three percent of those who fought in the Battle of Breed’s Hill. There are undoubtedly errors of omission and errors of commission for various reasons; one goal is to gradually reduce these.

The ABBHR, can never be a complete roll. One of the battle’s best-known historians, Richard Frothingham, was paraphrased by joint special committee on the Bunker Hill Tablets in 1889:

“That it is impossible to decide about the exact troops engaged on the American side. Men were coming and going all day, and the contemporaneous reports are very meagre and contradictory.”[1]

The ABBHR was initially intended to be used as a quick start for anyone wishing to determine whether a patriot ancestor fought in the Battle of Breed’s Hill. However, as a digital corpus, the ABBHR should also be useful to aid research on the societal and economic impacts of the Battle of Breed’s Hill and the larger context of the Siege of Boston on New England.

The following stipulations and criteria for including a soldier in the ABBHR were used:

1. The geographic extent of the battle for the Americans: This includes any area where balls and shot from cannon or muskets reached soldiers with the capacity to wound or kill.

Being anywhere within this extent and exposed to enemy fire constitutes being in the battle. For the purposes of locating soldiers and units, it was convenient to subdivide this extent into three zones:

- a. Zone 1 ranges from the line of fortifications and battle extending from the rail fence on the left to the redoubt, and then into and including the portions of Charlestown that were occupied by American companies prior to the burning of the town.
 - b. Zone 2 is all areas of the Charlestown Peninsula westward of zone 1, including the Charlestown Neck.
 - c. Zone 3 is the area beyond the Charlestown Neck including Lechmere Point, Inman's farm, and Prospect Hill. General Ward sent units to this area to guard against a second landing of the Regulars.[2]
2. Determining who was known to be in or potentially in the battle: This work starts with the muster rolls produced by each militia or later Continental Army company that participated in the Siege of Boston. Companies were the unit of execution for producing muster rolls. These rolls are official records and were sworn as true by the captains of each company. The rolls usually provide a list of soldier's names, ranks, and enlistment dates. Some rolls also provided the soldier's duration of service, hometown, age, stature, and occupation. Regiments collected their company's rolls and together along with a roll of staff officers those constitute the regiment's roll. To ascertain whether a soldier could have been in the battle, the company and staff officer rolls offer several vital pieces of evidence, which are listed here in order of preference:
 - a. Positive Attribution of being in the battle. The first roll taken after a battle has the highest likelihood of containing useful information. Notes for whether a soldier was a casualty (killed, wounded, or taken prisoner), lost equipment or clothing, or simply had a statement of being in the battle confirm being in the battle. Positive attribution differs from other claims such those made on pension applications, though some of pensions when corroborated by affidavits by who are already on the roll may be considered as positive attribution.

- b. Term of service includes the day of the battle: Soldiers with enlistment dates from April 21 through June 16, 1775 are included. Soldiers with enlistment dates of June 17 need additional evidence to be included. One other roll was typically present in soldier's records; this was for marching on the April 19, 1775 alarm. Most soldiers had a short term of service, usually under one week; many of these soldiers went home and did not return. An enlistment date after the term of service for the April 19, 1775 alarm is required, as is a duration of service that includes June 17, 1775.
- c. Individual Identity: The number of soldiers named John Jones, Benjamin Clark, or even Phineas Johnson is high enough that additional information is needed to potentially identify them as someone's ancestor. Thus, the name of their town, and any identifying notes from the rolls are included in the ABBHR. This information also aided in quality assurance tasks such as eliminating duplicate records or disambiguating initially identical, but otherwise valid records of soldiers.

Thus, companies with soldiers having enlistment dates prior to the battle, durations of service that include the day of the battle could have been in the battle. However, a company with one or even a few soldiers with positive attribution for being in the battle on its roll is not sufficient to prove the company was in the battle. There are several documented cases of soldiers who joined in with companies and regiments other than their own as these units were ordered to reinforce Colonel Prescott's command. If the company rolls, as described above, can be labeled as "bottom up" logic to assert that a company was in the battle, there also needs to be a "top down" positive attribution for the company to be listed as being in the battle. Such attribution comes from accounts and histories of the battle.

To wit, many of the summaries of the Battle of Breed's Hill suffer from listing only regiments, regardless of whether the entire regiment participated. The reality was quite different. Many of the regiments sent three or five out of eight companies into the battle. In a few cases only a portion of some companies were sent. Practicality was at the heart of this reality. Sending only the best soldiers would be one reason to send just half a company. Furthermore, many of the

Massachusetts regiments were still being organized and some of their companies had not been filled up (all their soldiers recruited and present), despite having officers already commissioned.

Thus, it is necessary to organize the work of compiling this roll on a company-by-company basis. This starts with ascertaining whether the company fought. There are two ways to do this. The first is confirming whether the rolls contain references to casualties. The second is to research the commander of the company. The town histories for each of the commanders exist and usually have a chapter on the 'War of the Revolution'. Within those chapters the town historians usually extol with pride the names of the soldiers who fought in important battles. Histories of the Battle of Breed's Hill also list company commanders and sometimes include a note about the body of soldiers they commanded, i.e., the whole company or part.

Once a company is verified as participating in the battle the names of the soldiers with conforming service dates are added to the ABBHR and notes regarding positive attribution of individual participation are included.

When it is found that only a part of the company participated, only those soldiers on the roll with positive attribution are added to the ABBHR as there is no basis to include other soldiers. There are also cases where no roll exists, and other means will need be used to verify the participation of soldiers in those companies.

Not all the soldiers with service dates marched into the battle on June 17, 1775. Thus, this roll for including so many soldiers who potentially fought likely includes a small, though significant percentage of soldiers who were absent, on duty, sick, or unfit for duty. Rolls only note such if the duty or absence occurred on the date the roll was taken; no rolls were taken on June 17, 1775. A few regiments had their companies take rolls during the week prior to the battle. All companies in all regiments made rolls on August 1, 1775, but not all of these survived. It is also worth noting that even sick soldiers did not wish to risk being branded a coward for allowing mere sickness to keep them from being in a battle. Thus, the percent of soldiers not in the battle is likely low, in the range of two to five percent.

[Detailed Compilation Method](#)

The compilation was started using the National Park Service document "Roster of New Hampshire Soldiers in the Battle of Bunker's Hill June 17, 1775"[3] which lists most New

Hampshire soldiers who fought and includes their company commander and regiment commander. This compilation was made available as a .PDF file and the text of this file in Adobe's Acrobat Reader was copied and pasted into a text document and processed programmatically to create a .CSV (Comma delimited Text) file that could be converted into a database table, initially in Microsoft Access format using ArcGIS software in 2006. The result was a table with 1,624 rows, each representing one soldier who fought. Later analysis of the Massachusetts rolls showed that several of the soldiers attributed to being in Massachusetts companies did not have terms service that included the battle, and these soldiers were removed.

Approximately 100 rows were added over the next 15 years for commanders and officers of regiments known to have fought, and other officers and NCOs who were listed in other sources. The purpose of the work at the point was for the purposes of demonstrating the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as being valuable for gaining an understanding of the Battle of Breed's Hill, creating maps of the battle, and locating individual soldiers from New Hampshire on the battlefield. Also included in this timeframe were several New Hampshire soldiers who were omitted due to oversight. Positive attribution generally came from Volume 14 of New Hampshire's State Papers (Volume 1 of the rolls), which also lists of soldiers who lost items during the battle.[4]

At that time, the online availability of the Connecticut and Massachusetts records was limited. Since then, these volumes have been scanned and published in several online repositories, thus making it possible to attempt to complete the rosters for these states.

The remainder of the work on the initial version of the ABBHR was completed in late 2020 and early 2021. The following details the methods used to review and add soldiers from Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts.

Connecticut

The primary source was the "Record of service of Connecticut men in the I. War of the Revolution, II. War of 1812, III. Mexican War". This source lists the regiments engaged in 1775, their officers, and company rolls. However, several company rolls are missing or incomplete, thus, approximately 110 of the private soldiers and non-commissioned officers who were in the battle for Connecticut could not be identified. The Connecticut Rolls also only list the towns for the officers. A special note following the 3rd Connecticut Regiment's rolls indicate that six of the

eight Connecticut regiments were present as part of the Siege of Boston and details those that took part in the Battle of Breed's Hill.[5]

- Captain John Chester's 9th company, 2nd Connecticut Regiment (Col. Spencer) 30 soldiers under Lt. Goodrich with Knowlton. Rest of soldiers arrived with Chester during the battle. 103 total.
- Col. Putnam's 1st company, 3rd Connecticut Regiment 30 soldiers under Lt. Grosvenor. No roll exists.
- LTC Experience Storr's 2nd Company - 30 Under Knowlton are Lt. Dana, Sgt Fuller and 28 privates
- Maj John Durkee, 3rd Company, 3rd Connecticut Regiment with 30 soldiers with Knowlton
- Captain Thomas Knowlton, 5th Company, 3rd Connecticut Regiment – Entire Company 101 soldiers.
- Captain James Clark, 6th Company, 3rd Connecticut Regiment – Entire company. Some Knowlton and remaining 30 soldiers arrived during battle under Storrs.
- Captain William Coit's 4th Company, 6th Connecticut Regiment (Col. Parsons) – Entire company arrived during battle under Storrs; no roll exists.

The soldiers from Connecticut were deployed in two groups. First was about 200 under Knowlton who helped with the fortifications. It was Knowlton's 100 plus approximately 30 soldiers from each Storrs', Chester's, Durkee's, and Putnam's companies

Second was a group of 200 so under LTC. Experience Storrs arrived in the early part of the battle. These included the remaining 73 from Chester, and all of Clark's and Coit's (no confirmation as to how many). There is no way to know which of Putnam's, Storrs', Durkee's or Coit's soldiers were there beyond those with positive attributions.

[New Hampshire](#)

For New Hampshire, the U.S. National Park Service (NPS) had already produced "Roster of New Hampshire Soldiers in the Battle of Bunker's Hill June 17, 1775" in 2002 and shared it online as a .pdf file in 2004.[3] To create the ABBHR, the contents of this document were copied out of the .pdf and reformatted into a text file that could be imported into Microsoft Excel. The

processing was done using Python by processing the file line by line to standardize the contents into a comma separated text file (.csv).

The NPS roster did not include all soldiers from New Hampshire. Those in several Massachusetts companies were missing. The initial version of the ABBHR included 137 additional New Hampshire soldiers. During the processing of the Massachusetts rolls it became clear that a lesser standard for including New Hampshire soldiers in the NPS roster was used. Some of these soldiers appeared in rolls but lacked enlistment dates and durations of their service. Several did not appear on rolls prior to the battle and after verifying their names and services in the New Hampshire Rolls these soldiers from the NPS roll were removed and not included in the ABBHR.

Massachusetts

The primary source was the Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War. A compilation from the Archives.[6] This is seventeen volume set contains an alphabetical list the names of soldiers found on the rolls of all Massachusetts companies during the American Revolutionary War. When possible the soldier's town, service, dates of service, and sometimes additional notes were included. This meant the same soldier could be listed multiple times. This occurred whenever there were two or more identical names from the same town who served in the same capacities. Additionally, standardized spelling of names did not exist when the rolls were taken, and often the same soldier's name would appear later in a volume under an alternate spelling with include an additional service. Sometimes this caused the same soldier's services to be shown in a different volume if the first letter of their last name varied.

The seventeen volumes of the Massachusetts rolls were scanned and optical character recognition (OCR) technology was used to produce a corpus of text to allow users of Google Books or Archive.org's websites to search the text. However, to establish a likelihood of participating in the Battle of Breed's Hill, a complex search, or query was needed. This included the names of company and regiment commanders, the year 1775, and any words that would indicate positive attribution such as "battle", "wounded", etc. Web browsers do not support advanced searches with wild cards, and the OCR processing broke each line of print into a separate text string and searching across these strings was also not possible.

To overcome this, the .txt files for each of the seventeen volumes from archive.org were processed using the following steps:

1. Using NotePad ++ software: Opened each file and removed extra text at the beginning leaving only the entries for the soldiers and their contributions. NotePad++ is a free, open source, modern text processing software program. It can open and work with much larger files than older Windows 95 era notepad.exe or wordpad.exe software. Even Microsoft Word is less efficient. NotePad++ is very efficient for searches and supports wildcard and escape character for find and replace.
2. While NotePad++ can do the above, it is difficult to systematically process a large body of text through multiple steps or sequences of steps. Additionally, NotePad++, like browsers, cannot search across multiple lines of text. Thus, the text needed to be further processed to support searching. The Python programming language was used with PyScripter software to do this work. The core Python software libraries for processing lists and strings are rich in capability to do this work; and the re (regex) library allows for efficient complex find and replace operations. The following steps were used to process the seventeen volumes text file:
 - a. Using the os library and the file open and write methods, opened read and concatenated lines of text from each of the seventeen volumes into one list of strings and wrote it into a single output file to be used in the subsequent steps.
 - b. Conditionally removed end of line characters and standardized the encoding (some of the files contained artifacts from different encoding which made searching inconsistent). The condition for removing an end of line characters was if the number of characters in the line exceeded four, making it longer than “\n\r” which is the standard end of line escaped character sequence; this allowed for one blank line between the names of soldiers.
 - c. Remove hyphenation. Late 19th century printing depended upon hyphenation to save space and paper. Hyphenation, however is difficult to overcome when setting up complex searches.

These steps had the impact of taking this five-string set of text:

Corey, Ephraim, Stow. 1st Lieutenant, Capt. Oliver Parker's co.. Col. William Pres-

cott's regt. ; list of officers [year not given] ; also, Lieut. Nathaniel Sartell's co., Col. William Prescott's regt. ; muster roll dated Aug. 1, 1775; engaged April 24, 1775; service, 98 days; </50. Captain, Col. Prescott's regt. ; company return dated Cambridge, Oct. 7, 1775.

And transforming it into this single text string:

Corey, Ephraim, Stow. 1st Lieutenant, Capt. Oliver Parker's co.. Col. William Prescott's regt. ; list of officers [year not given] ; also, Lieut. Nathaniel Sartell's co., Col. William Prescott's regt. ; muster roll dated Aug. 1, 1775; engaged April 24, 1775; service, 98 days; </50. Captain, Col. Prescott's regt. ; company return dated Cambridge, Oct. 7, 1775.

3. Using NotePad++, opened the result of step 2 and did further cleanup work, which included the following:
 - a. Removed the “continued” lines (find, and replace with nothing)
 - b. Removed the page heading lines (find, and replace with nothing)
 - c. Noting frequent OCR errors where characters were commonly misrepresented, did find and replaces to fix as many of these issues as possible. These included “AV” for “W”, “x” for “n”. However, single character replacements are not advisable, so only entire name replacements such as “AVilliam” to William; “Richardox” to “Richardson”; “WiUard” to “Willard”. These frequently combined so something like “AViUiam” to “William” was needed. Particular attention was paid to regiment and company commander’s names to ensure they could be found in later searches.
4. While NotePad++ is excellent for searching for one name in this file, it is not ideal for finding an entire company of soldiers. Python was required for this task. With python the file with all seventeen volumes of entries can be searched in three to five second and a second file of all entries meeting desired criteria can be produced. These company level files were used as the basis for manually reviewing each soldier to verify they belonged or not in the ABBHR. A typical query would include six to eight criteria:

- a. Contains: “min Ames.+Fry” which will unambiguously find Captain Benjamin Ames of Col. James Frye’s regiment.
- b. Contains “Fry.+Bunk” would find instances of Frye and Bunker Hill, which would provide positive attribution for being in the battle. Other positive phrases included “battle”, “June 17” and “casualt”
- c. Contains “min Ames.+June 17” could do similar for a company commander’s name to potentially tie their soldiers to the battle.
- d. Sometimes company commander or regiment commander names were ambiguous and additional negative searches could be used to eliminate extra results.
- e. Contains “liste.+Apr” which will find enlisted in April sequences. Similar was done for May and June.
- f. Search strings intentionally used the combination of the fewest letters of the end of a company commander’s first name, then the first letters of the company commander’s last name. The reason is to lower the risk of missing a soldier because of OCR misinterpretation of characters in the commander’s names.

The following is a listing of the Massachusetts regiments and support for including them and specific companies as being in the battle. Any company using a number followed by [6] indicates men with positive attribution for being in the battle were on the roll.

- 1st Massachusetts, LTC Jonathan Ward: Only a few companies were engaged.[7]
 - Captain Job Cushing’s Company. Frothingham [8]
 - Captain Luke Drury’s Company. Pierce[9], 1[6]
 - Captain Eliakim Smith’s Company. Frothingham [8]
 - Captain Seth Washburn’s Company. Frothingham [8], 1[6]
 - Captain Moses Wheelock’s Company. 1[6]
 - Captain Jonas Hubbard. No evidence they were in battle, 0[6]
 - Captain Samuel Wood. No evidence they were in battle, 0[6]
 - Captain Josiah Fay. No evidence they were in battle, 0[6]
 - Captain James Millan. He is shown on Swett’s Roll[10], but otherwise has very entries in rolls, and none confirm he is in command of a company on June 17, 1775.[6]

- 5th Massachusetts, Col. Asa Whitcomb: Only two companies. [11]. No other companies had soldiers with positive attribution for being in the battle.[6]
 - Captain Abner Cranson. 1[6] Lacks August 1 roll; only four soldiers with enlistment dates.[6]
 - Captain Andrew Haskell. [12], 2[6]
- 9th Massachusetts, Col. William Prescott: The entire regiment, as it existed on June 17, 1775 was in the battle, eleven companies in all, and each had men with positive attribution.[6]
 - Captain Reuben Dow. 14[6]. Wounded.
 - Captain Henry Farwell. He was severely wounded, 6[6]
 - Captain Samuel Gilbert. Commissioned June 13 and took over Eliphalet Dinsmore's co.; Dinsmore served until June 13, 1775 but had become too ill. 7[6]
 - Captain Asa Lawrence. 6[6]
 - Captain Hugh Maxwell. 4[6] Wounded.
 - Captain Joseph Moore (often Moors). 5[6]
 - Captain John Nutting. 9[6]
 - Captain Joshua Parker. A 1st Lieutenant in Oliver Bates's co. on April 19 until May 24, then captain. 4[6]
 - Captain Oliver Parker. 1[6], On Aug 2, 1775, he was courts martialed for filing false returns to steal provisions and sell them. Found guilty and cashiered; he was not available to make and thus, was not on the Aug 1, 1775 roll, which was completed by his successor, Ephraim Corey.
 - Captain Samuel Patch. 4[6]. No August first roll, so only soldiers with positive attribution are included. Otherwise, later in the year, the company looks to be of similar size to the others in the regiment.
 - Captain Abijah Wyman. 5[6]
 - Other captains in Swett roll of officers: [10]
 - Asa Parker. No soldier of this name is listed as an officer in 1775.[6]
 - Other captains found in the rolls.[6]

- Captain Ephraim Corey. in battle, though as lieutenant in Oliver Parker's company. Corey was appointed captain on or about August 2 after the results of Oliver Parker's courts martial.
 - Captain Henry Haskell. Only served until May 7, 1775.
 - Lieutenant Nathaniel Sartell. In battle, though as a second lieutenant in Oliver Parker's company. Sartell is captain of this company on the last roll of 1775 as Ephraim Corey was courts martialed in November of 1775 and cashiered.
 - Lieutenant Zachary Walker. In battle as lieutenant in Joseph Moore's company. He was promoted to captain on June 22, 1775.[6]
- 10th Massachusetts, Col. James Frye: The entire regiment was engaged, though Frye was not initially on the field. Lt. Col. James Brickett commands. Frye came on near the end of the battle during the retreat and was shot through the leg while on his horse. He later died of the wound.
 - Captain Benjamin Ames. 28[6], Rolls lacked service dates and duration;
 - Captain William Ballard. 30[6], Rolls lacked service dates and duration.
 - Captain John Currier. 12[6], Rolls lacked service dates and duration.
 - Captain John Davis. 3[6], Oct 6 roll had enlistment dates and durations.
 - Captain Jonathan Evans. 24[6], Rolls lacked service dates and duration.
 - Captain Benjamin Farnum. 11[6],
 - Captain Nathaniel Gage. 8[6], Lacks Aug 1 roll, used May 17 and Oct 6 Rolls.
 - Captain William Perley. 1[6], Only Aug 1 roll for the regiment.
 - Captain Jonas Richardson. 4[6], Rolls lacked towns, and enlistment dates, included men on June 9 pay roll and who were on October roll.
 - Captain James Sawyer. 4[6], Used Sept 1 roll from Fold3.com and compared to Massachusetts Rolls[6]
- 11th Massachusetts, Col. Ebenezer Bridges – All but three companies under Col. Prescott's command on night of June 16, 1775. Those three were left to guard Cambridge with Gardner's, Paterson's and Ward's regiments. [13]
 - Captain Ebenezer Bancroft. 15[6] Wounded – lost part of his hand.
 - Captain John Bacheller. 0[6] Appears likely they on guard at Lechmere Point.

- Captain Peter Coburn. 4[6]
- Captain John Ford. Putnam ordered this company to move Capt. Callender's abandoned cannon out of redoubt to near rail fence. [14] 1[6]
- Captain Charles Furbush, 2[6] Appears likely they on guard at Lechmere Point.
- Captain John Harnden. 4[6] Appears likely they on guard at Lechmere Point.
- Captain John Row, 5[6]
- Captain Jonathan Stickney. Asa Pollard's company – he was first to be killed early in the day by a cannon ball.[22] 2[6]
- Captain Benjamin Walker. was wounded and captured, 3[6].
- 13th Massachusetts, Col. James Scammon – Entire regiment, but not included as they failed to take the field. The regiment spent most of their time on Cobble Hill and only reached the top of Bunker Hill after the retreat had begun. Scammon was courts martialled, and acquitted. [16]
- 15th Massachusetts, Col. Thomas Gardner: Gardner is 2nd highest ranking officer to lose his life, dying of his wounds on July 3, 1775. Most of regiment did not reach the battle. Putnam delayed some companies at Bunker Hill to dig breastworks. Gardner was wounded as he approached by Trevett's position. [17]
 - Captain Abijah Child. 1[6], Jedediah Thayer lost a gun and bayonet.[6] May have been stopped by Putnam to dig breastwork per Lock's and Fuller's companies
 - Captain Benjamin Lock. 0[6], Joseph Trask, states Putnam ordered them to make a breastwork on Bunker Hill. [18]
 - Captain Nathan Fuller. 2[6] Enoch Baldwin, states his company helped move [Captain Foster's] cannon to the top of Bunker Hill where Putnam also stopped his company to remove entrenching tools that were no longer needed, but soon ordered them onward; and had almost reached the redoubt when the retreat began. [19]
 - Captain Josiah Harris. 0[3] They reached the lines before the retreat and were the last to retreat. [20]
- 16th Massachusetts, Col. John Nixon: About 300 marched, likely six companies, and Nixon was wounded. [21] Nixon's soldiers were stationed at the Hay Breastwork below the gap. [22] Six companies were in the battle:

- Captain Joseph Butler. his lieutenant (Walker) fought in the declivity between the rail fence and redoubt. [23]
- Captain Thomas Drury.(50 Framingham men) Part of the company was in the redoubt and part at the hay breastwork. [24]
- Captain Micajah Gleason. His company was with Drury's. [24]
- Captain Moses McFarland. wounded in the battle with Haverhill and NH men. [25]
- Captain David Moore. has men from Haverhill who fought. [25]
- William Smith. 0[6], All sources imply his company fought, though he was sick and confined to his tent. [26] Lt. John Heald commanded in the battle. The pension applications of Ephraim Billings, Joseph Chaffin, Elijah Mason, Joseph Mason, and John Oliver from this company claim they were in the battle.[27]
- Other companies:
 - Captain Abishai Brown. This company as not present. [23] One soldier with positive attribution, Benjamin Ball was deceased, and end of service was June 17, 1774. [6]) plausibly went with another company. Ball's name was not on the plaques.[28]
 - Captain Jeremiah Gilman – No evidence they were in battle, 0[6]
 - Captain Samuel McCobb. Marched April 19, but then men consistently have gap of not being engaged until later.
 - Captain Ebenezer Winship's company was still being recruited – many enlistment dates are mid-June and July.
- 18th Massachusetts, Col. Ephraim Doolittle: Doolittle and Lt. Col. Benjamin Holden were absent; Major Willard Moore commanded; he was mortally wounded. [29]. Swett's estimates for casualties do not reflect the rolls or the findings of the committee on the plaques.
 - Captain Joel Fletcher. 3[6], [29]
 - Captain Jonathan Holman. 3[6], [29], Thomas Beal's pension confirms they did not reach the battle. [32]
 - Captain John Jones. 8[6].

- Captain John Leland. 0[6], Leland led his company, but fled and resigned, a coward. Jacob Miller is put in place afterward. [30] Moses Greenwood's pension application corroborates, "... *that he served as a private under the said Capt. Leland until the Seventeenth of June when the battle was on Bunker Hill which battle he was in, but Capt. Leland was afraid to go in to the battle and that is the last he saw of his Captain that summer. General Putnam was trying to drive him into the battle with his sword, but our Lieutenant, whose name was Burbank took command of the company and took them into the battle ...* " [31] Soldiers are listed under Miller, who made the roll. [6]
- Captain Robert Oliver. 3[6], part – Philip Ballard's pension confirms they did not reach the battle, but did cross the Charlestown Neck before retreating. [33]
- Captain Adam Wheeler. 2[6], [29] In Charlestown. [34] No Aug 1 roll, so only those with positive attribution are included. [6]
- Captain Abel Wilder. 3[6]. Letters to his wife indicate part of his company fought and that he fired nineteen times. [35]
- Other companies lacked soldiers with positive attribution. [6]
- 19th Massachusetts, Col. Jonathan Brewer: Brewer was wounded as were Lieutenant Colonel William Buckminster of the regiment and Major Willard Moore who was then fatally wounded when struck by a ball while being carried off. [36]
 - Captain John Black. 9[6]
 - Captain Benjamin Bullard. 0[6], The pension documentation of Moses Hill, Sergeant Nahum Wight, wounded musket ball in the thigh, suggest the August 1 roll was not fully annotated. [37] Bullard was in the fort and later gives Swett a quote from Putnam. [38]
 - Captain Aaron Haynes. 2[6]
 - Captain Thaddeus Russell. 1[6]
 - Other Companies:
 - Captain Daniel Whiting – No men with positive statements. 0[6] Daniel Gay of the company claims to be there, Rolls do not support. Pension documentation for Thomas Morse states the company got only as far as Prospect Hill. [39]

- Captain Isaac Gray. No men with positive statements. 0[6]
 - Captain Edward Blake. No men with positive statements. 0[6]
 - Captain Moses Harvey – Of Montague, Engaged May 12. No other officers named until July 1st. 0[6]
 - Captain Joseph Stebbins. No men with positive statements. [6]
- 22nd Massachusetts, Col. Benjamin R. Woodbridge: Sent a detachment off to the right in the main street of Charlestown.[40]
 - Captain David Cowden. 0[6], Started with Fold3.com scan of roll and verified with Massachusetts Rolls. This company is frequently credited as being the one of Woodbridge's that was in Charlestown, however, no documentation can be found to prove this was true.
 - Captain William Meacham / John King. 2[6], Meacham is killed in the battle, Sergeant John King takes command.[41] No lieutenants, ensign, fifer, or drummer in the roll, hence a sergeant being next in command. John King's entry in the Massachusetts Rolls confirms Meacham's being killed in battle. [6] Presumed to be left of Redoubt given presumption of Cowden being in Charlestown.
 - Captain Reuben Dickinson. Abel Woods in this company wounded at Lechmere Point while entrenching. [6]
 - No other companies have soldiers with positive attribution for being in the battle. [6]
- 24th Massachusetts, Col. Moses Little: Some companies were guarding at Lechmere point starting the evening of June 16, 1775. Col. Little led three companies, referring to Warner's Perkins' and Dodge's. to the redoubt just before the battle started. Little was in the Redoubt. [42]
 - Captain Abraham Dodge. 1[6] The entire company is said to have marched. [43]
 - Captain Benjamin Perkins. 3[6], Swett tells of crossing Neck. Putnam sent them to the exposed position between the breastworks and the rail fence.[44]
 - Captain Nathaniel Wade. 11[6], Was at the rail fence (quoted in Swett notes p14, where he confirms that Callender's guns were fired several times and two of his men helped.[44]

- Captain Nathaniel Warner. 11[6], Arrived earlier with Little and went to rail fence. Had as few as 23 soldiers. Some men were noted as being in the fort before going to the rail fence. [45]
- Captain Ezra Lunt. 0[6] Swett says they arrived at the battle line around the same time Captains Chester and Coit from Connecticut, which may imply they were at Lechmere point earlier. [46]
- Other companies:
 - Captain Jacob Gerrish. No men with positive statements. [6]
 - Captain John Baker. No men with positive statements. [6]
 - Captain Joseph Roby. No men with positive statements. [6]
 - Captain Timothy Barnard. No men with positive statements. [6]
- 25th Massachusetts, Col. Samuel Gerrish. Three companies were at Chelsea in the morning of the battle. Gerrish reached Bunker Hill with part of his regiment between the first and second British attack and likely crested the hill during the second. Gerrish reached the base of Bunker Hill as Charlestown begins to burn. [47] Lieutenant Colonel Loammi Baldwin's casualty roll is the only such roll for any Massachusetts regiment and appears to provide a fuller set of soldiers with positive attribution for being in the battle.[6]
 - Captain John Baker. 3[6], Made it to the front lines (Swett mentions "Capt. Bayley, only, of Gerrish's regiment, reached the lines."; this is prior to Gardner's men arriving. [48] There is no Capt. Bayley; Baker is the closest phonetic match. There is no Captain "Bayley" from Massachusetts until 1777 and it is John Bayley of Michael Jackson's Regiment.[6]
 - Captain Thomas Cogswell. 5[6]
 - Captain Barnabas Dodge. 4[6]
 - Captain Richard Dodge. 2[6]
 - Captain Thomas Mighill. 7[6], Mighill's and others under Adjutant Hans Christian Ferbiger follow. [49]
 - Captain William Rogers. 6[6]
 - Captain Samuel Sprague. 5[8]
 - Captain John Wood. 8[8]

- 27th Massachusetts, Col. Paul Dudley Sargent: Ward order to guard against a British landing at Inman's farm. When winds prevent such a landing, the regiment was allowed to proceed toward Bunker Hill. They were apparently behind Gardner and Ward and the retreat had begun likely preventing their Crossing the Neck. [50] The regiment was not completed, just four companies, about 200 men.[6]
 - Captain George Gould. 0[6]
 - Captain Moses Hart. 0[6]
 - Captain Jesse Saunders. 0[6]
 - Captain John Wood. 0[6]
 - Three additional companies were not enlisted until July.[6]
 - Captain James Keith.
 - Captain James Perry.
 - Captain John Porter.
- Massachusetts Artillery, Colonel Richard Gridley: Three companies; Captains Samuel Gridley, John Callender, and Samuel Trevett; deployed their cannon on the battle lines.
 - Captain John Callender. 1[6], initially deployed to the redoubt, but there were no embrasures, and the platforms were unfit. His [2] guns one's carriage was disabled, and both were moved to the rear and then the space between the redoubt and rail fence. Here, Callender fired his working gun to good effect several times. [51]
 - Captain Thomas Waite Foster. 0[6], Not included in ABBHR. [52]
 - Captain Samuel Gridley. 0[6], two pieces inside the redoubt and one was disabled early, and Gridley drew them off to the rear of the redoubt. [53]
 - Captain Samuel Trevett. 1[6], ordered out by Ward just after first attack. [54] Had two pieces and disobeyed Major Gridley's order to move to Cobble Hill and instead went to the battle lines. He left one piece, damaged by enemy cannon, on Bunker Hill and proceed to the lines with the other. They fired this until late and the men left, but Trevett got some infantry to haul the remaining cannon up Bunker Hill, while closely chased by the enemy. This was the only of the cannon deployed to be returned from the battle. [55]

- Major Scarborough Gridley. Had 2 brass pieces and proceeded only a few hundred yards toward Charlestown. He withdrew to Cobble Hill where he fired inadequately at the Glasgow. Gridley took Mansfield's regiment as a guard. They were not in range or danger. Not included in ABBHR. [56]

Discussion

This method produced a list of soldiers who were in or had a likely basis to have been in the Battle of Breed's Hill because these soldier's names appeared on company rolls that indicated their term of service included the day of the battle. With respect to casualties, the list was checked against the names on the plaques outside the memorial in Charlestown and does contain several additional names that were not known to the committee that determined the lists for the plaques. There are also several names missing because those soldiers or volunteers did not appear on a roll. These discrepancies represent the difficult nature of undertaking the production of the ABBHR.

This method produces a collection of names with errors of commission and omission at the level of individuals and companies.

With respect to the errors of commission, it presumed that if a company was documented to have participated in their entirety, then all men on the roll are included in the ABBHR. This necessarily includes men who were on other duties, sick, or absent. Rolls would indicate such a status for soldiers only on the date the roll was taken; it was meant to indicate how the men were mustered and counted. There were no rolls taken on June 17, 1775, so the state of each company is not known on that day. Most of the rolls used to produce the ABBHR were taken in July or on August 1, 1775. Conservatively, about two to five percent, or one to three men of each regiment may have been absent. This would vary in that some companies may have been all present, whereas others may have had eight or ten men sick on a given day.

With respect to errors of omission, there are several cases that are likely:

- There are documented cases of men from other companies and regiments that joined or were picked to march with units that were in the battle. There are several cases with positive attribution.

- The querying of the text file for the Massachusetts rolls suffers from OCR errors, and not all soldiers in each company may have been included.
- Despite best efforts of company commanders, sometimes a soldier is omitted from a given roll, despite being on the immediate previous and subsequent rolls. This was checked in verifying which soldiers to include on the ABBHR, but human error possible. This is compounded by the fact that the August 1, 1775 rolls were often only the second roll, and many soldiers who fought did not serve longer than three months from the beginning of the Siege of Boston. If such soldiers were omitted from the August 1 roll, then they are not accounted for.
- The ABBHR is a twenty-first century digital product derived from scans of nineteenth century printed publications that are transcriptions of eighteenth century manuscript documents. That means there are at least three conversions of format, or changes for misrepresentation.
- It is possible that some companies have been omitted from the analysis conducted for the ABBHR.

Errors of omission can and will to the largest extent possible be corrected with time and effort in the ABBHR.

The difference between how the militia units used rolls to account for their men's service and pay them differs from how libraries and archives organized these documents. The company rolls, once created and signed/sworn as true by their commanders, were collected by the adjutants of each regiment, brigade, and state. Today, researchers access these rolls in the opposite direction, starting with state, then looking for brigades, regiments, then companies. Thus, there is a tendency to summarize at state or regiment level, i.e., most descriptions of revolutionary war battles on Wikipedia only list which regiments were in the battle. Often companies were deployed in several locations and some may not have seen action or been on a given battlefield.

Conclusion

Beyond the rolls, the work of historians Colonel Samuel Swett and subsequently Richard Frothingham to document and record the details of the Battle of Breed's Hill are used throughout the research to ascertain the involvement of companies in the battle. Swett paid particular attention to casualties and his work was used as a starting point by the joint special committee of

the City of Boston in their work to prepare the lists of soldiers for plaques. Frothingham did prepare a list of all the companies of all the regiments that participated but did not attempt to remove any that may not have fought. Swett and Frothingham are sensitive to the fact that June 17, 1775 was extremely complex. The eye-witness accounts suffered from a sort of contextual myopia, i.e., the soldiers could only see what they saw and it is impossible to ascertain whether one soldier saw something that occurred before or after another event that was out of their sight. Despite this limitation, the ABHHR evolved through its creation to create a minimum standard of attribution for assigning a soldier or company as being in the battle. However, the ABHHR should not be used as definitive as Swett and Frothingham were correct in belaboring the point that our understanding and knowledge of the Battle of Breed's Hill is also not definitive.

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