Guide to the Timothy Bedel Papers, 1763-1787

Administrative Information

**Title and Dates:**
Timothy Bedel Papers, 1763-1787, bulk 1771-1785

**Repository:**
New Hampshire Historical Society
30 Park Street
Concord, NH 03301
603-228-6688
http://www.nhhistory.org/

**Collection Number:**
1880.001

**Author of Finding Aid:**
Unknown; rewritten and formatted by Sandra L. Wheeler

**Creator:**
Timothy Bedel, 1740?-1787

**Language:**
The materials in this collection are in English.

**Extent:**
One box; 12 folders; approximately 250 items

**Abstract:**
The Timothy Bedel Papers contain correspondence, accounts, commissions, deeds and an inventory of his estate. Bedel was active in the Revolutionary War and the bulk of the papers relate to that service, during which he led a NH regiment in an expedition into Canada. They concern military affairs, supplies, pay and muster rolls, etc.
Access and Use

**Acquisition Information and Provenance:**
Gift of Mrs. Mary Bedel of Bath, NH in 1880.

**Processing Information:**
This collection was processed by an unknown person at an unknown date. The finding aid was written by an unknown person at an unknown date but rewritten and formatted by Sandra L. Wheeler in April, 2014. This finding aid follows the standards set-forth by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard.*

**Access Restrictions:**
Available for research.

**Location:**
The collection is housed at the New Hampshire Historical Society in Concord, New Hampshire.

**Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements:**
This collection is on paper but has also been microfilmed. A microfilm reader, available in the New Hampshire Historical Society Reading Room, is required to view microfilmed collection.

**Copyright/Conditions Governing Use:**
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**Preferred Citation:**
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Collection Overview

**Biographical Information**
Little is known about the origins or youth of Timothy Bedel. Neither the place nor the year of his birth has been definitely established, but the most likely possibility is that he was born around 1740 in either Haverhill, MA, or Salem, NH. If he was born in Haverhill, he moved to Salem sometime during his youth for his name appears on the tax list for that town in 1757 and 1759.

Beginning in 1760, there is a record of Bedel’s participation in the French and Indian War. In that year, he took part in the British siege of Montreal and, on his return home, passed through the upper Connecticut River Valley. He settled there a few years later. In 1762, he received a commission as captain in the British colonial forces under
the command of Lord Geoffrey Amherst and, in the same year, traveled with the Royal
Provincials to Havana where he participated in the siege of that city.

In 1763, with the war over, Bedel moved his family to Haverhill, NH, founded
just two years earlier. At this time, the entire northern portion of the Connecticut River
Valley was in its infant stages of settlement. As an early settler in the region, Bedel was a
grantee of Haverhill and Bath, NH, as well as Newbury, Haverhill’s sister-city across the
river in the territory that later became Vermont.

Bedel was active in the civic affairs of the region from the time he arrived. He
lived in Haverhill for the first six years, moved to Bath in 1769 where he stayed until
1775, when he returned to Haverhill. He did not achieve more than local prominence
until the outbreak of the American Revolution. In 1775, when hostilities erupted, he was
a representative from the town of Bath to the Provincial Congress of New Hampshire at
Exeter, NH. On June 6, 1775, the provincial Congress commissioned him as a colonel of
rangers.

In September 1775, Bedel marched his three companies of rangers to Canada
where, under the command of Gen. Montgomery, he participated in the siege of St.
John’s. After St. John’s was taken, Bedel went on to Montreal. However, he did not take
part in the attack on Quebec, returning home instead to raise more men. In January 1776,
he raised eight companies, received commissions as colonel of a regiment from both the
New Hampshire provincial congress and the Continental Congress, and rejoined the
Northern Continental Army in Canada. He was given command at the Cedars, a military
post forty-three miles above Quebec.

In May, while Bedel was away, the Cedars was unnecessarily surrendered to a
party of British regulars, Canadians and Indians by his second-in-command, Major Isaac
Butterfield. The surrender was something of a Continental disgrace: Benedict Arnold, the
leading figure in the Canadian expedition, was enraged and immediately brought charges
against Bedel for leaving his post. Even the Continental Congress acknowledged the
affair, terming the surrender ‘shameful’ and attributing the responsibility for it the
commanding officer.

Brought before a court martial, Bedel claimed that he had not been aware that
Arnold’s orders restricted him to the Cedars. He asserted that his orders included
instructions to cultivate friendly relations with the Indians of the region. Accordingly, he
had left the Cedars, even while suffering from smallpox, in order to meet with a group of
Indian chiefs at Caughnawaga that was just a few miles outside Montreal. While there, he
received reports that the enemy was advancing on the Cedars. He considered returning
immediately but was persuaded by the chiefs to stop at Montreal first to report the results
of the conference. The trip to Montreal actually required only several extra hours, but
after leaving that city he became too ill to travel and thus did not reach the Cedars before
it was surrendered.

At the court martial, Arnold’s influence triumphed over Bedel’s defense, and
Bedel was found guilty of ‘quitting his post.’ As a result, he was cashiered from the
service, along with Isaac Butterfield. The court, however, distinguished between the two
men’s crimes: Butterfield was officially incapacitated from ever holding a commission
again, while Bedel was simply cashiered.

Within a year, Bedel was engaged in correspondence with General Gates, passing
along intelligence information that he received from scouts in Canada and agitating for
another Canadian expedition. In the fall of 1777, he participated in the Saratoga campaign as an officer of low rank in a militia regiment raised in his region. In November 1777, he was again commissioned by the Continental Congress and empowered to raise a regiment of volunteers.

The Congress made this appointment in preparation for another invasion of Canada that was scheduled for February 1778. Accordingly, Bedel received orders from General Gates in November instructions him to prepare to raid St. John’s the following February. He began the preparations, but the plan for his raid was evidently abandoned, as he received new orders to rendezvous with Colonel Moses Hazen’s regiment for a combined drive into Canada. The rendezvous date was set for February 20, but just as Bedel was preparing to march, he received orders from General Conway to remain at Haverhill. After some further confusion, particularly, whether John Stark or the Marquis de Lafayette had command of the expedition, all the invasion plans were abandoned. Lafayette ordered Bedel to keep his regiment at Haverhill and to use it to defend the frontiers of northern New Hampshire.

By June 1778, Bedel had once again become something of a controversial figure. General John Stark, who commanded the Northern Department from Albany, was convinced that Bedel was defrauding the Continental Congress by collecting pay and rations for twice as many men as were actually enlisted in his regiment. Stark complained about Bedel to General Gates and asserted that the only way to ascertain the exact size of Bedel’s regiment was to order the entire unit to proceed to Albany where Stark could see it for himself. One hundred of Bedel’s men were already at Albany and were extremely unhappy with the terms of their enlistment. Bedel, who was working to have them returned to Haverhill, was unwilling to deliver up the remainder of his regiment to Stark’s scrutiny. He claimed, with some justification, that his regiment was needed around Haverhill to protect the upper Connecticut valley settlements from attacks by marauding bands of Tories and Indians. The Committees of Safety from surrounding towns supported his position, and the regiment remained at Coos despite Stark’s suspicion.

Bedel’s triumph, however, was short-lived: less than a year later, in April 1779, his regiment was disbanded. The decision to disband the regiment was made against Bedel’s wishes and he tried, with the help of Moses Hazen, to persuade the Continental Congress to allow him to raise another. Why the decision was made and who was responsible for making it are both unclear. One possibility is that Starks’ suspicions were shared by other generals or by members of the Continental Congress. Perhaps of more importance to whoever made the decision was the controversy that was raging over the political control of the territory of Vermont.

Like most of his neighbors, Bedel opposed the establishment of New Hampshire authority over the towns of the Connecticut Valley. He advocated the creation of a state independent of the three parties that were competing for the territory: New Hampshire, New York, and Massachusetts. At times the controversy became extremely heated, and the relations between the New Hampshire government at Exeter and the towns on the eastern bank of the Connecticut River were seriously strained. The Exeter government was adamant in its demand that these towns remain under its jurisdiction, and many of the inhabitants of these towns were equally adamant that they become part of an
independent state. Violent confrontation over the status of these towns became conceivable.

Within this context, the decision to disband Bedel’s regiment could well have been motivated by the desire to reduce the possibility of armed conflict within the ranks of the colonists. Neither the Continental Congress nor the state of New Hampshire wanted to support a regiment which might be used against its own forces. In addition, the British threat from Canada, which had originally necessitated the maintenance of a regiment of the frontier, had been sharply reduced with the defeat of Burgoyne’s army two years earlier. To the men in Philadelphia and Exeter, Bedel’s regiment might have represented more of a liability than an asset. If these were the case, the decision to disband it was a natural one.

Almost at the end of the war, Bedel retained his interest in the possibility of another Canadian expedition. Although his rationale for advocating another invasion was that Canada had to be conquered before his own region would be secure, the real motivation for his vivid interest seems to have been a desire to acquire tracts of Canadian land. He wrote to Moses Hazen that even without his regiment, he would be ready to assist a Canadian expedition in any he could and added, “I have had intelligence by several Parties who I have sent out to St. Françoise and to the River Masco to view the Lands in those parts who report it is the most excellent land they ever went over.” However, the Canadian expedition that he wanted never materialized, and he sat out the remainder of the war in Haverhill, tending his own business interests as well as those of Moses Hazen.

After the war he remained active in the affairs of Haverhill and for a short period entered into a partnership with Moses Hazen evidently for the purpose of speculating in land. Hazen, however, seems to have been the more active partner as he played a role in establishing several new townships in Vermont whereas Bedel restricted his acquisitions to the Haverhill – Bath area. When he died in 1787, Bedel was a prominent citizen of Haverhill and moderately well-to-do; his estate, after the deduction of all debts, was worth more than 7000 Pounds.

Collection Scope and Content Note:

The materials in the Timothy Bedel Papers almost all relate to his activities in the Revolutionary War, during which he lived in northern New Hampshire and raised and led a regiment for an expedition into Canada. He corresponded with Moses Hazen, Brigadier General Jacob Bayley, General George Clinton, General George Washington, General Horatio Gates, Marquis de Lafayette, General John Stark and others. There are accounts for supplies for his regiment, pay and muster rolls, a draft of a speech he gave to the Seven Tribes of Canada and another he gave in his defense when he was under court martial.

The papers include materials having to do with Hazen’s interest in acquiring land and other business affairs, his opinions about the political situation in the upper Connecticut River Valley, and the inventory of his estate.

There is no family correspondence. Some letters are Bedel’s copies rather than the originals (General James Clinton, General Thomas Conway, General Horatio Gates, marquis de Lafayette, General John Stark). There are also copies of printed correspondence.
Contents List

**Box 1**
Folders 1-5: correspondence, arranged chronologically, 1771-1785.
Folder 6: copies of printed correspondence, 1775-1779
Folder 7: Undated material and miscellaneous
Folder 8: Pay and muster rolls, 1776-1778
Folder 9: Bedel’s commissions, 1762-1777
Folder 10: Bedel’s estate inventories, 1787
Folders 11-12: Deeds, 1767-1786

Detailed Folder List:

**Box 1**
Folder 1 Correspondence, accounts, 1771-1777 Bedel’s raising and provisioning men for Canadian expeditions and for protecting the frontier of northern New Hampshire. Intelligence reports from Canada; draft of a speech made to the Seven Tribes of Canada, 1775; draft of defense speech at his court martial, 1776
Folder 2 Correspondence, accounts, 1778; receipts for provisioning of men in Bedel’s regiment; correspondence re supply situation and general security of Coos, prospects of another Canadian expedition, the deployment and activity of Bedel’s regiment; intelligence reports from scouting parties in Canada
Folder 3 Correspondence, 1779 with Brigadier General Jacob Bayley and General George Clinton: handling provisions in Coos, establishing of a commissary, building a store, protecting supplies; with Moses Hazen: Hazen’s land interests around Haverhill, the road Hazen’s regiment built through Coos and northern Vermont, Continental Congress’s attitude toward the dispute over the Vermont territory; with George Washington: informing Bedel that a court of inquiry had been established to investigate the conduct of the quartermaster and commissary in Coos, asking Bedel to be present at the inquiry.
Folder 4 Correspondence, 1780-1781 with Moses Hazen: military affairs, prospects of another Canadian expedition, social and political situation of towns in the Connecticut Valley, Hazen’s business interests around Haverhill, Bedel’s involvement in the inquiry into the conduct of the commissary at Coos. Scale of depreciation of continental money between 1777 and 1781
Folder 5 Correspondence, accounts, 1782-1785. Accounts: Bedel’s statements against the United States for money owed him. Correspondence: with Moses Hazen re Hazen’s business affairs in Haverhill and affairs of several newly established Vermont towns with which Hazen was involved.
Folder 6  Copies of printed correspondence, 1775-1779 from American Archives, fourth and fifth series, and Saffel’s Records of the Revolutionary War. Letters relate primarily to the Canadian expedition of 1775 and 1776, the march of Bedel’s companies to St. John’s, the siege of St. John’s, the storming of Quebec and the death of Montgomery.

Folder 7  Miscellaneous and undated material includes Indian accounts of General Gates, General Washington and Brigadier General Bayley; accounts of Marquis de Lafayette, General Wooster, General Montgomery, General Arnold; accounts for several companies in Bedel’s regiment; Bedel letter re a Canadian expedition.

Folder 8  War Rolls, 1776-1778; pay rolls and muster rolls for companies in Bedel’s regiment.

Folder 9  Bedel’s commissions, 1762-1777.

Folder 10  Inventories, 1787
   Inventory of Estate of Timothy Bedel
   List of claims against the estate
   Memorandum of deeds for land bought or sold by Timothy Bedel.

Folder 11  Deeds, 1767-1785
   Land in Bath, NH, bought or sold by Timothy Bedel.

Folder 12  Deeds, 1763-1786
   Land in Haverhill, NH, bought or sold by Timothy Bedel.

Separated Materials:
Three military commissions have been removed to Timothy Bedel oversize materials.

Subject Terms
People:
Bayley, General Jacob
Bedel, Timothy, 1740?-1787
Chittenden, Governor Thomas
Conway, General Thomas
Clinton, General James
Cuyler, Cornell
Everitt, Captain Edward
Gates, General Horatio
Hall, Enoch
Harvey, Alexander
Hazen, Colonel Moses
Ladd, Captain Ezekiel
Lafayette, Marquis de
Morey, Captain Israel
Nelson, Captain Charles
Phelps, Noah
Richardson, Captain Luther
Schuyler, General Philip
Sloan, Captain John
Stark, General John
Taylor, Captain Joseph
Thornton, Matthew
Traversie, Captain Robert
Troup, Robert
Washington, General George
Wheelock, Lt. Colonel John
Whipple, William
Winship, Ebenezer
Young, Captain Samuel

Organizations:
- United States. Continental Congress
- United States – History – Continental Currency
- United States – History – Revolution, 1775-1783
- United States – History – Revolution – Canadian Expedition
- United States – History – Revolution – Muster Rolls
- United States – History – Revolution - New Hampshire Rangers

Subjects:
- Border controversy – New Hampshire/Vermont
- Continental currency
- Deeds
- Estate Inventories
- Land speculation – New Hampshire Grants

Locations:
- Bath, NH
- Coos County, NH
- Haverhill, NH

Occupations:
- Military