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Colonel Elnathan⁵ Haskell (Elnathan⁴, Joseph³, Mark², Roger¹)

by Charles Thomson "Tom" Haskell III



John Trumbull's painting of the surrender of British General John Burgoyne at Saratoga, New York on October 17, 1777 is in the rotunda of the nation's capitol. Elnathan Haskell is standing behind the cannon on the right.

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The search for Elnathan's story should have been easy, but as the search progressed it became more entangled. He apparently did not keep any sort of detailed record, and his military career began at age 19 and ended prior to his 29th birthday. What are known are several key dates in his military career and that he was very active during the Revolutionary War. The first item I received about Elnathan Haskell in the 1990s was a poor Xerox copy of his portrait from the Yale Art Museum that had the label "Aide-de-camp to General Howe." When I showed this to another individual he stated not all Hasskells were patriots – some were Tories. He had jumped to the conclusion that Elnathan served Britain's William Howe. This did not set well with me because my father had told me that he served George Washington. Only much later did I find out that the General Howe for whom Elna-

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than was an aide-de-camp was the continental army's Major General Robert Howe of North Carolina.

The popular story was that "Elnathan Haskell went south with General Greene and settled at Amelia Township on the Santee River, South Carolina, where he married Charlotte Thomson..." (Haskell Chronicles, p. 153). A little further on the page, Ira Haskell quoted a letter from Alexander Cheves Haskell that stated, "My grandfather Elnathan, desc. From Roger, but left Massachusetts during the Revolution going as a young staff officer of Gen. Howe to the colony of South Carolina. He remained there after the war, married a daughter of Col. William Thomson of the Revolution and died, leaving two sons, my father, Charles T. and uncle William E. also several daughters." (Ibid.) Even this added explanation from the Haskell Chronicles omits lots of information.

Missing from the record were the particulars regarding General Greene and the time period he may have been with him. Ira Haskell does record Elnathan's entry into the service in Plymouth County, Massachusetts and his presence at the Battle of Saratoga including the frontispiece "Surrender of General Burgoyne, October 16, 1777" painted by John Trumbull with Elnathan under the lowest tip of the flag behind the cannon. However, there is no mention of his service at Valley Forge and West Point. When did he have time to travel to South Carolina? Apparently he gained some familiarity regarding the South through his assignment with Major General Robert Howe. Howe's career took him as far south as Georgia's southern border with Spain's Florida. Perhaps, also, his friendship with Tadeusz Kosciuszko who helped design the defenses at West Point continued when Kosciuszko was assigned to General Greene in the Southern Campaign at Ninety-Six and the Siege of Charleston (Win Haskell, *The Haskell Family Anthology* Volume II, p. 48).

There is evidence Elnathan's service ended June 20, 1784 (Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War, Volume 7, p. 435) almost seven years before he married Charlotte Thomson on May 12, 1791. So his Revolutionary War service lasted only about a year longer than the time between leaving the service and marrying – not quite the cause and immediate effect the quick historical summary implied in the *Chronicles*. A closer examination of birth dates demonstrates that the additional time was appropriate since in 1784 Charlotte would have been only about 14 years old rather than 20 in 1791. Also what did Elnathan do between 1784 and his decision to settle in the

vicinity of Charleston, South Carolina in 1790? We know he spent some time in France (Haskell Anthology, Vol. II, p. 48) and apparently brought a letter of introduction with him to Charleston signed by a Mr. John Brown Cutting of London, dated 19 February 1790. Apparently the returning ship was the *Amelia*. (Ibid.)

Let's backtrack to his entry into the service. From the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society's website (<http://www.duxburyhistory.org/local-history/duxbury-in-the-revolution/>) one can find out something about Elnathan's first assignments under the leadership of Colonel Theophilus Cotton. Prior to the Revolutionary War in 1774, Theophilus Cotton was in charge of an attempt to move Plymouth Rock to the town square in Plymouth from its location in the bay. Unfortunately, witnesses "had the unpleasant experience of watching the rock split in two when a team of oxen attempted to raise it. Only the upper portion of Plymouth Rock left the waterfront originally for display in the Town Square." Much later, "The Pilgrim Society acquired the other half of Plymouth Rock in 1859, and in 1867, a Plymouth Rock canopy structure was completed at the waterfront to house it. Unfortunately, the canopy was not large enough to hold the whole rock, so a few pieces had to be hacked off and sold as souvenirs. Finally, in 1880, the upper chunk was united with the lower piece of Plymouth Rock--cement did the trick! And "1620," the date of the Pilgrims' arrival in Plymouth, was permanently carved into the rock." (<http://gonewengland.about.com/cs/sbostonsights/a/aaplymouthrock.htm>)

More closely related to Elnathan is Theophilus's formation of the Revolutionary War unit that he joined. Rochester is somewhat inland in Plymouth County and along with volunteers from Plymouth, Kingston, and Duxbury, a unit of patriots was formed. "On April 19, 1775, news of the battles at Concord and Lexington quickly spread throughout New England. Colonial militia companies which had been drilling for months in anticipation of a crisis rapidly gathered in Plymouth. Under the command of Colonel Theophilus Cotton, the colonial regiment... headed for Marshfield to engage the British. The colonial officers held a council of war at the home of Lt. Col. Briggs Alden in Duxbury." (Ibid.) What followed was called, "The Almost Battle of Marshfield."

Theophilus Cotton "...was an ardent patriot but also, apparently, a cautious man." Following his meeting the morning of April 20th at Alden house, he waited until "the morning of April 21, around 7 a.m." to march "his regiment to Marshfield" to about one mile from

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Early 1900s post card photo of the front of Col. Briggs Alden's house

where the British were garrisoned. By noon it was estimated that Cotton had “about 500 men to Balfour’s (British contingent) 100.” Other patriots got within firing range in time to watch two British vessels begin to evacuate Marshfield and Theophilus opted not to stop them. “Balfour later reported that, if he had been attacked, he would have surrendered without a shot.” Some think the lack of activity was due to the fact that Cotton had not fully grasped that the Revolutionary War was at hand. (Patrick Browne, “The Almost-Battle of Marshfield” [January 10, 2011] accessed at <http://historicaldigression.com/tag/theophilus-cotton/>)

Despite this inauspicious start some of the units – and this included Elnathan’s -- saw considerable action: “Without a doubt, the Duxbury soldiers that saw the hardest duty were those that were sent to the Continental Army. Two companies, under Captains Joseph Wadsworth and Thomas Turner, were formed in 1777 soon found themselves in some of the fiercest fighting in the Revolution. They served with the 14th Massachusetts Regiment commanded by Duxbury Colonel Gamaliel Bradford. Turner’s Company served the longest of any Duxbury company, from 1777 to 1780. They were with Washington during the hard winter at Valley Forge and fought at the battles of Germantown and Monmouth... The sheer number of Duxbury men who signed up for service is remarkable. Some 270 are on record, representing the vast majority of the town’s adult male population. As in most New England towns, enthusiasm for the war waned dramatically in Duxbury by 1778. There were few enlistments after this time.” (Duxbury History)

As Elnathan acquired experience he was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant serving Thomas Turner, and promoted again to Captain serving Gamaliel Bradford. He was reported to have been with General Washington at the Patriots’ defeat at the Battle of Brandywine Creek.



**Yale University Art Gallery
Trumbull Collection**

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut 06520
1832.61

Artist John Trumbull
Elnathan Haskell (1755-1825)
1791

Oil on wood
10.2 x 7.6 cm (4 x 3 in.), framed 13 1/2 x 12 in.

The British occupied Philadelphia and things were looking bleak. Burgoyne had victory at Fort Ticonderoga and was moving south. His movements were slowed down in part by Burgoyne’s 30 wagons of personal belongings. Without going into further details battles on September 19 and October 7, 1777 were sufficiently discouraging to Burgoyne that he surrendered. As noted earlier, Elnathan is included in John Trumbull’s painting which appears in the Capitol Rotunda in Washington, DC and was not finished until 1821 – subsequently the painting was first cleaned and restored by Trumbull in 1828 and subsequently cleaned many times – most recently in 2008. For those further interested in the painting in the Capitol Building and for the identity of all the participants there is a handy key available. (<http://americanrevolution.org/burgkey.html>)

While the victory at Saratoga convinced the French to

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join the patriots in the American Revolution and ultimately helped assure the ultimate victory at Yorktown, the loss of Philadelphia forced the Patriots to spend the Winter at Valley Forge. While the deprivations at Valley Forge are well known, it was also a time George Washington required all Continental soldiers to sign an Oath of Allegiance.

Two Haskells, Elnathan Haskell, brigade-major General Patterson's regiment; and Jonathan Haskell, ensign assigned to Colonel Bradford's regiment are listed on page 4 of the individuals who signed the Oaths of Allegiance at Valley Forge, 1778. (<http://colonialancestors.com/revolutionary/oath4.htm>) Each soldier was asked to sign the oath, "I (name of soldier) do acknowledge the United States of America, to be

Free, Independent and Sovereign States, and declare that the people thereof owe no allegiance or obedience to George the Third, King of Great-Britain; and I renounce, refuse, and abjure any allegiance or obedience to him; and I do swear that I will to the utmost of my power, support, maintain and defend the said United States, against the said King George the Third, his heirs and successors and his or their abettors, assistants and adherents, and will serve the said United States in the office of (rank of the soldier swearing allegiance) which I now hold, with fidelity, according to the best of my skill and understanding." George Washington, himself, signed his oath May 12, 1778. (<http://www.libertybellshop.com/washingtonoath.html>)

The time Elnathan Haskell spent at Valley Forge was

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Two U.S. stamps contain a Haskell as part of the image. Are there any others?

The design of both of these stamps is based on John Trumbull's painting of the surrender of British General John Burgoyne at Saratoga, which is shown on the cover of this issue, and contains the image of Elnathan Haskell standing behind the cannon on the right.



This two-cent stamp was issued in 1927 at the 150th anniversary of the battle.



This \$1 stamp was issued on May 5, 1994.

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long enough to become acquainted with George Washington – not necessarily on a strong personal level since Elnathan does not appear in Washington's diaries, but there are eight instances in which Elnathan's name appears in either orders signed by George Washington, or more significantly in two cases Washington attests to Elnathan Haskell's character well after the Revolutionary War. The following links are from George Washington's Papers which constitute part of the Library of Congress's American Memory Collection. Some of the General Orders reflect duties to perform in administering Court-martials, and others reflect new assignments. These are listed in order by the date of the citations:

<http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mgw/mgw3g/003/079.jpg>
(General Orders, Valley Forge, **February 26, 1778** – Assignment of Elnathan Haskell acting Brigade Major for General John Paterson's Brigade.)

<http://memory.log.gov/mss/mgw/mgw3g/003/200.jpg>
(and continues to 201.jpg – General Orders, Valley Forge, **May 12, 1778** regarding attending a court-martial as representative for General John Paterson's Brigade.)

NOTE: British surrender at Yorktown was October 19, 1781. Elnathan was still serving in the Continental Army.

<http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mgw/mgw3g/006/171.jpg>
(a continuation from 170.jpg) General Orders **June 18, 1782**, Head Quarters, Newburgh, acquitting Captain Williams in a General Court Martial initiated by Elnathan Haskell and held at West Point on June 15th.)

<http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mgw/mgw3g/006/210.jpg>
(continues on to 211.jpg – General Orders, **August 10, 1782**, Head Quarters, Newburgh. Allows Elnathan to return to duties at the Garrison in Westpoint following listing deserters from 1777 to 1782)

<http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mgw/mgw3g/006/264.jpg>
(continues on to 265.jpg) (Head Quarters, Verplankspoint, General Orders **September 2, 1782**, appointment as aide-de-camp to Major General Robert Howe [of North Carolina] – Elnathan served in that capacity from November, 1783 to June, 1784.)

<http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mgw/mgw3g/007/182.jpg>
(Head Quarters, Newburgh, General Orders, **June 11, 1783**, order to assemble and form into Regiments and Corps under the commands of Major General Heath and General Knox.)

<http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mgw/mgw2/016/0670067.jpg>

(continues on to 0680068.jpg) (Letter to the Honorable Major General Knox, **January 1, 1789** written from Mt. Vernon) ***This letter included notice of the certificate in the next document which was sent on behalf of Major Elnathan Haskell. Much of the remainder of the letter is historically interesting since George Washington seemed reasonably certain that John Adams would be the first Vice President.***

"Mount Vernon, January 1, 1789.

My dear Sir: I have received by the last Mail your favor dated the 21st. of December, and hasten to return this acknowledgment, together with the enclosed Certificate of Service¹ for Major Haskell.² I give that testimony with the greatest alacrity, because it always affords me satisfaction, when I can gratify the wishes of a worthy man, in perfect conformity to my own judgment."

[Note 1: A copy of the certificate is entered in the "Letter Book" immediately following this letter.]

[Note 2: Elnathan Haskell. He had been aide to Maj. Gen. Robert Howe.]

After discussion concerning the federalists and anti-federalists Washington wrote, "From different channels of information, it seemed probable to me (even before the receipt of your letter) that Mr. John Adams would be chosen Vice President. He will doubtless make a very good one: and let whoever may occupy the first seat, I shall be entirely satisfied with that arrangement for filling the second office."

<http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mgw/mgw2/016/0690069.jpg>
(Certificate, **January 1, 1789** sent by George Washington to Major General Knox)

January 1, 1789

Certificate

I hereby certify that Major E. Haskell held a military appointment in the army of the United States during the war, with the fairest reputation; that his conduct, while acting on the staff as a Brigade Major and afterwards as an aid de camp to Major General Howe, having fallen under my particular notice was such as to merit my entire approbation; and that in every station according to the best of my knowledge and belief, he behaved himself as a faithful, brave and assiduous officer. As such, I cannot hesitate to make known my favorable opinion of his character, and to recommend him to the patronage of the Friends of Merit accordingly.

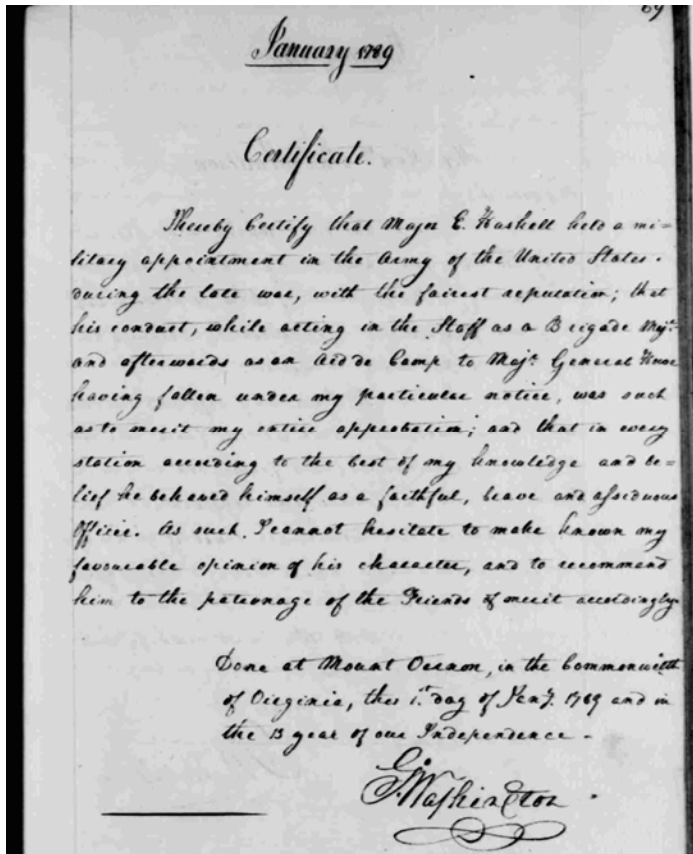
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Done at Mt. Vernon in the Commonwealth of Virginia this 1st Day of January 1789 and in the 13 year of our Independence.

Signed by George Washington



As noted above Elnathan Haskell was assigned in 1778 as Brigade Major to General John Paterson who had an illustrious career. As noted on the Lenox, Massachusetts historical marker, General Paterson “Crossed the Delaware with Washington, Dec. 25, 1776 and was in the Battles of Trenton and Princeton. Was made Brigadier General, Feb. 21, 1777. Assisted in the capture of Burgoyne, October 1777, and was in the battle and council of Monmouth in 1778. In 1780, he commanded West Point and was on the trial of Major Andre. He was in most of the decisive battles of the Revolution and served during the whole war. He was one of the founders of the Society of the Cincinnati in May 1783 and on September 30, 1783, he was made Major General. After the war, he returned to Lenox and was a most public spirited citizen. In 1786, he commanded the Massachusetts troops in putting down Shays’ Rebellion.”

Elnathan Haskell became acquainted with Tadeusz Kosciuszko as a result of the Saratoga campaign and

also his design of West Point. “Gen. Horatio Gates and George Washington felt that Kosciuszko was the best engineer in the Continental Army.” After the fall of Ticonderoga, “Kosciuszko rescued the fleeing army by taking hundreds of men and chopping down trees to block the roads once the Continental soldiers had passed. The British needed roads to move their cannons and supply wagons, and Kosciuszko also had his men roll boulders to reroute streams to flood those roads. Because of Kosciuszko’s diversionary tactics, it took the British 22 days to travel 20 miles.” (Alex Storozynski, “The American Revolutionary War Hero U.S. Historians Have Ignored,” September 6, 2009 accessed from: History News Network, <http://www.hnn.us/articles/98179.html>)

It’s also possible that Elnathan and Tadeusz Kosciuszko were together at West Point and perhaps in Greene’s South Carolina battles at Ninety-Six, Eutaw Springs, and the Siege of Charleston, although I can find nothing definitive about in which Southern battles Elnathan was a participant. At West Point, George Washington had Kosciuszko design the blueprints in such a way that it was turned into “an impenetrable fortress that the British were afraid to attack.” (Ibid.)

In the Haskell Anthology II on page 48, there is a letter from Kosciuszko to Elnathan Haskell while Elnathan was in France. As noted in the Anthology, the English is far from perfect but it’s easy to sense his loyalty to worthy causes and to liberty at a time that Poland was still repressed by Russia. The letter from Warsaw on 10 August 1789 follows:

“My Dear Haskell,

You ask great many questions to answer in one letter, in a busy period we are now, is too much..

The brave Paul Jones is at Petersburg – I am sorry he is in the service of Russia, A Republican and an American – it is sufficient to draw conclusion of the politics of my country. I will tell you in one word. We are upon the means to be respectable abroad; to give more energy for the execution of established laws and destroy forever any hope for raising a monarchique power.

Happy am I to hear the situation of America. It is my second country.

Pray my compliments to Mr. Morris, Rutledge, and to others present at Paris. My heart is chagrined that they have been silent when you wrote a letter to me.

Be convinced of my everlasting friendship for you –

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I am not able to answer with such a stile [sic] and pleasing expression, but if simple, sencier (sic [for sincere]) and true word, not to be disregarded, I am totally your...

signed T. Kosciuzko" (Anthology II, p. 48.)

There is another intriguing letter of introduction to Mr. Gabriel Manigault given to Elnathan by Mr. John Brown Cutting of London, dated 19 February 1790 appearing in the Anthology. (Ibid.)

"This note will be delivered to you by Major Haskell, a native of the State of Massachusetts and formerly an officer in the Army of our common country. I had not till lately the pleasure of his acquaintance but, having met him in France and being persuaded of his merit and hearing he is about to embark for Charleston and knowing that he is quite a stranger there and remembering, when I was such, how soon Mrs. Manigault and yourself caused me to forget it, domesticated and rendered me happy, I cannot refrain from introducing him to you, although I have no better title to take such a liberty in behalf of Major Haskell than the most lively and grateful sense of your excessive kindnesses to myself...."

The letter must have had some effect because the Manigaults were Descendants of French Huguenots who originally settled in Charleston in 1695, the Manigaults amassed great wealth as rice planters and merchants during the 18th century and were one of South Carolina's leading families. (See: <http://www.charlestonmuseum.org/N5Content/pdf/houses/jmh%20tourbook%20web%202011.pdf>)

The Manigaults also had quite a reputation for being architects. In 1809 Elnathan Haskell became the owner of the Zante Plantation designed by the very family for whom the letter of introduction was written. The Manigaults had also owned the plantation itself. Unfortunately the Zante Plantation now has been vandalized but still gives some indication of its former glory. (<http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/calhoun/S10817709015/index.htm>)

Obviously there's more to the story since we have not found exactly how William Thomson and Elnathan Haskell met, nor exactly how Elnathan became acquainted with Charlotte Thomson. It is clear that they became neighbors not too far from Fort Motte – both the Belleville Plantation of William Thomson and the Zante Plantation are not all that far apart. If that link is discovered, then we may have more information for a future issue.



Zante Plantation Southeast of Fort Motte off SC 601

Other accounts of Elnathan Haskell's service are available from Peter P. Haskell's account in *The Haskell Family in the Armed Forces, Vol. Two, The United States of America, Part One 1625 to 1853*, pp. 34-36. Some of Peter's account originally appeared in the *Newsletter of the Haskell Family Society*, Volume 6, Number 4, December, 1997, pp. 3-5, which is now available to both societies through the *Members Only* page of the HFA website (<http://haskellfamily.org>). To access this page, you need to enter a user ID and a password. Your user ID is your email address on file with HFA and your password is your HFA number. All IHFS members have been assigned a 4-digit HFA number starting with 2 (2xxx).

Also worthy of review is Win A. Haskell, editor, *The Haskell Family Anthology, Volume II*, "The Haskell of the Abbeville District, South Carolina, USA" pp. 47-50.

Both the Armed Forces Book (a consolidated version) and the Haskell Anthology are available from Higginson Books. Use a Google Search for Higginson Books and enter Haskell in the search box:

- * **HASKELL FAMILY IN THE ARMED SERVICES. Volume II. Part 1: 1625-...** \$91.00

HASKELL FAMILY IN THE ARMED SERVICES.
Volume II. Part 1: 1625-1853. Part 2: 1854-1866 By
Peter P. Haskell. 138+696p. 2010 HARDCOVERS
GENHA201AH ...

- * **The Haskell Family Anthology, Volume II** \$44.00

By W. A. Haskell. 211 pages. 2004. GENHA202BH ...
