

THE JACOB BAYLEY STORY

Jacob Bayley was an effective military leader, a courageous pioneer, a diplomat and a driven man when facing a challenge. He is described on an historic marker in Newbury, Jacob Bayley, Founder of Newbury and Revolutionary General.

Veteran of the Indian Wars, Bayley led a migration of settlers from Newbury, Massachusetts to the rich lands of the Coos here at the Great Ox-Bow. His accomplishments were far too great to fit on one historic marker, but he is fondly remembered in Newbury.

Jacob Bayley was born on July 19, 1726 in Newbury, Massachusetts to Joshua and Sarah (Coffin) Bayley; the Bayleys were a farm family of modest means. Jacob received a basic education in the local schools, and at age 19 took a wife, Prudence Noyes. They began raising a family in Massachusetts, but the youngest of their ten children were born in Vermont (not so named at the time of their birth).

When the French and Indian War broke out, Jacob Bayley, already active in the colonial militia, became in 1756 a Lieutenant in Captain Alcott's company. He would later be promoted to Captain, commanding his own company, and saw service in Lake George, New York - he remained in the militia throughout the Indian Wars, rising to the rank of Colonel by the end of the conflict in 1760.

Jacob Bayley did lead a group of pioneers from Newbury, Massachusetts to settle along the Connecticut river in 1762, and used his influence to secure a charter from Governor Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire. When the charter was issued on May 18, 1763 Jacob Bayley was the primary grantee.

Governor Wentworth's grants in the country west of the Connecticut came into question when in 1764 the King of England set the New York line at the west bank of the Connecticut river, and it was the opinion of some that all grants made by the Governor of New Hampshire were void. Most of the conflict with the Governor of New York was in the western half of the New Hampshire Grants, so settlers in Newbury moved forward with little alarm. However, because there was some concern, in 1771 Jacob Bayley petitioned to annex the Connecticut river towns to New Hampshire. When this request was denied, he applied for a New York charter for Newbury, asking for the same rights and privileges granted by Governor Wentworth of New Hampshire. The New York charter for Newbury was granted on February 19, 1772, and did follow very closely the earlier charter from New Hampshire.

Jacob Bayley's military career continued with the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, and during the battles with the English Bayley developed close friendly relationships with the Native Americans, increasing his value to the colonial cause. However, he sacrificed the loss of a large estate, and received no compensation for this loss. During the campaign Colonel Jacob Bayley realized that a better route was needed in order to provide reinforcements and supplies in any battle with the English in Canada.

He wrote repeatedly to General George Washington urging him to construct just such a road. Finally, on April 29, 1776, General Washington, feeling confidence in Colonel Bayley, without Congressional approval, gave the OK to construct the "military road" from Wells River northward to St. Johns - General Washington directed Bayley to use local men, and sent him 250 Pounds as start-up expense money. By mid 1776, when the road had reached Peacham, and had cost 982 Pounds, Bayley was ordered to cease the construction - he was never repaid for the balance of his expenditures, but was promoted to General.

Jacob Bayley held many important offices in the Town of Newbury, but beyond that Bayley was a delegate to the Continental Congress in 1777, that same year was a member of the Convention to draft the constitution of the State of Vermont. The founder of the Town of Newbury, who also fought for the freedom from British rule, was a true leader in that young settlement, and his importance to the Town of Newbury is remembered in many ways, not the least of which is the aforementioned historical sign, the large monument in the center of the Newbury common and the Bayley-Hazen Military Road monument in Wells River.

Jacob Bayley's descendants tended to stay in Newbury, in Wells River or nearby in Haverhill. The name Bayley became Bailey, and among the direct descendants seen in Newbury and Wells River in recent times are Wendell B. Clark (son of Clara Bailey Clark), Dorothy Gibson Stevens (granddaughter of Lizzie Belle Bailey Warden), her son Albert Stevens and Adele Bailey Ashley (granddaughter of Albert Bailey).

Jacob Bayley died in modest financial circumstances on March 1, 1815, surrounded by a loving family. He was buried in the Oxbow Cemetery in Newbury, Vermont.

Hod Symes