



ALLISTER F. MacDOUGALL
... carries rifle of original Westford Minuteman

84-year-old Westford Minuteman ready for Concord trek -- with original rifle

By GORDON B. SEAVEY

WESTFORD — Marching with a long, firm stride, a modern Minuteman who has seen more than four score years will keep pace with much younger ones (and drummer boys, too) when the Westford company of Minutemen participate in the annual Patriot's Day parade at Concord, April 19.

He is Allister F. MacDougall, who will be 84 years old come July 18. He is chairman of the town's bicentennial committee.

Steeped in local history, he has been over the years a preserver of countless Westford artifacts which long have been overlooked and perhaps lost forever.

In the morning march to the North Bridge, MacDougall will be carrying a rifle which a Westford lad of 21 carried two centuries ago for a more meaningful purpose. His name: Benjamin Osgood.

Young Osgood, born in 1754 at Andover, first appeared in Westford records as one of the 207 signers of the Solemn League and Covenant on July 4, 1774. The townspeople that day voted unanimously to support the boycott of British goods because of the blockade of Boston Harbor. His name appears as a "Benja Osgood" on the yellowed sheet, now under lock and key at the town library.

He was a private in Captain Jonathan Minot's company at Concord.

LATER, WHEN Minot's company was attached to Colonel Baldwin's regiment, enlisted January 1, 1776, Osgood was again on the roll. The men were "to receive one penny per mile for their rations from their Respective places of Abode and their return to the same."

As they were paid for the number of miles between Westford and Boston, it is probable they were of the force stationed near Boston.

Osgood was back in Westford soon thereafter, perhaps, to court a girl two years his junior. She was Tryphena Comings (Cumings) of an old local family. They were married on October 31, 1778, and as common in those times, were parents of a sizeable family six children.

He died a colonel at the ripe age of 70 on December 9, 1824, and is buried in Fairview

Cemetery, near the graves of many other Revolutionary veterans.

MACDOUGALL GUARDS with great love the ancient rifle of this original Minuteman. It came into his possession as the result of a long friendship with Mr. and Mrs. Houghton G. Os-

good, the last members of their line.

He recalls that it hung over the fireplace of the Osgood home at Chamberlain's Corner. Every 19th of April, the owners would call in the neighborhood children to tell them the story of young Benjamin and his rifle.

And it still fires — with accuracy!