

## **The First Pennsylvania Rifle Regiment: Warriors for the Republic: 1775-1783**

**by Luke Bruss, Communications  
Committee Member**

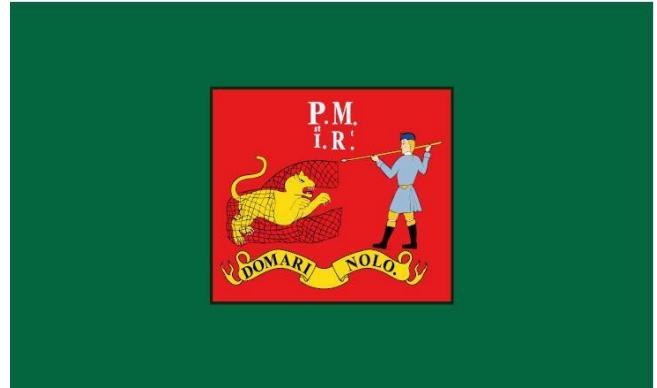
Last year I wrote about the display of historic flags that I hang on my porch for the July 4th holiday. Dubbed "The Festival of Flags", which starts on Flag Day (June 14) and runs through the week of Independence Day, it really is my favorite time of the year. The history, symbology, and splash of color that each flag adds really fuels my engine. If you didn't read it—shame on you for six weeks, as Mike Lange would say—I wrote about the first four flags I ever hung, and why I started it: as a symbol of national solidarity for the first Independence Day week following 9/11. Until now, every flag I've flown has had a primarily federal relevance. This year I add one with regional, as well as federal relevancy: The flag of the 1<sup>st</sup> PA Rifle Regiment, who fought in important Revolutionary battles all over the original Thirteen Colonies.

The Regiment was established as part of a resolution passed by the Continental Congress on June 14, 1775. It called for expert riflemen to fill six companies in Pennsylvania, and two each from Maryland and Virginia. Several days later, excitement for the cause of Liberty was so great that Pennsylvania would add three more. The nine Pennsylvania companies would be led by Col. William Thompson, of Carlisle, PA and known as Thompson's Rifle Battalion. On January 1, 1776 they were renamed the 1<sup>st</sup> Continental Regiment of Foot. Seven months later, when the young Army reorganized again, with each state asked to supply a quota for Continental service, Pennsylvania claimed Thompson's men as their own and renamed the group the 1<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Regiment.

The 1<sup>st</sup> PA participated in numerous significant battles including the Siege of Boston; the Attack on Quebec, under Benedict Arnold; they were amongst those suffering through the winter at Valley Forge; fought at Brandywine; and The Battle of Trenton where they captured Hessian forces, ensuring a crucial American victory and inspired many, many more to join the fight.

Known for deadly accuracy with their muskets, a doctor named James Thacher (1754-1844) said of them:

"They are remarkably stout and hardy men; many of them exceeding six feet in height. They are dressed in white frocks or rifle shirts and round hats. Their men are remarkable for the accuracy of their aim, striking a mark with great certainty at two hundred yards distance. At a review, a company of them, while in a quick advance, fired their balls into objects of seven inches' diameter at the distance of 250 yards. Their shot has frequently proved fatal to British officers and soldiers who expose themselves to view at more than double the distance of common musket shot."<sup>1</sup>



Flag of the Pennsylvania 1st Rifle Regiment

The men of the PA 1<sup>st</sup> fought under a banner that was just as bold as they were. Their flag is a green field featuring a lion ensnared in a net, with a spear-wielding soldier standing over it, centered in a red square. P.M. I. R. stands for Pennsylvania Militia 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment. A banner below the combative duo is emblazoned with the slogan "Domari Nolo." Translated from Latin: "I will not be subjugated."

This was surely inspired by the inflammatory actions and dismissive attitude King George III and the British Parliament had regarding the Colonies. At this time, and for decades beforehand, most Americans thought of themselves as British citizens, with all the rights of those living in Britain. Then came the Stamp Act; The Townshend Acts; the Boston Massacre, and the death of Crispus Attucks; The Boston Tea Party; and the Intolerable Acts. Slowly but surely resentment for the Crown began to grow.

Inspired by the Sons of Liberty; the passionate words of Patrick Henry's "Liberty or Death" speech; and seeing their pleas for peace to King George III go unrequited, they had had enough. On April 14, 1775, the world was forever changed when the American Revolution began with the shot heard round the world.

Continued on the next page

<sup>1</sup> James Thacher, "Military Journal during the American Revolutionary War from 1775 to 1783".



Flag of the Sons of Liberty

As I mentioned above, the warriors of the 1<sup>st</sup> PA played vital roles in some of the most important battles of the Revolutionary War. They were well-known for their marksmanship and considered an elite fighting force; so well-regarded, in fact, that they were usually given the honor of being positioned on the right of the line. The Regiment finished their service with fights at Yorktown, which saw Lord Cornwallis surrender to Gen. Washington and final operations in South Carolina.

After a distinguished career, and securing the blessings of liberty for their fellow countrymen, the First Pennsylvania Rifle Regiment was officially mustered out of service on November 3, 1783.

I invite you all to come on up into the New Village Courtyard and see the display, as a new flag is added almost daily. And please feel free to knock on the door if you have any questions.

**Happy Independence Day, Chatham Village!**  
-Luke Bruss

## Feral Cat Population Control Submitted by Joe Massarelli



I would like to recognize the efforts of a resident of Chatham Manor, Shirley Hanley, for her work involving feral cats over the past several years.

Shirley, along with several others have quietly and humanely controlled the feral cat population, in and around Chatham Village. Her understanding of feral cat culture has turned a serious problem around, to the point where many people don't even know it was a problem.

Her work is strictly voluntary, including the funding, which Shirley contributes without remuneration. She has removed 15 cats and kittens from the streets by capturing them, getting them health care and finding people to adopt them. She also has captured other older cats who may be difficult to adopt, but has them spayed or neutered and returned them to the street. They no longer breed and they keep the street population from expanding.

**Her actions have significantly reduced the feral cat population around our community and for that we say thank you!**

**The city of Pittsburgh will not be having a fireworks display this year, but several surrounding counties are!**

Any of the local news stations' websites have information on firework displays and events, but the list is too long to display here.

**Remember to stay safe, and have a great Independence Day!**