

JOE AND MOLLY

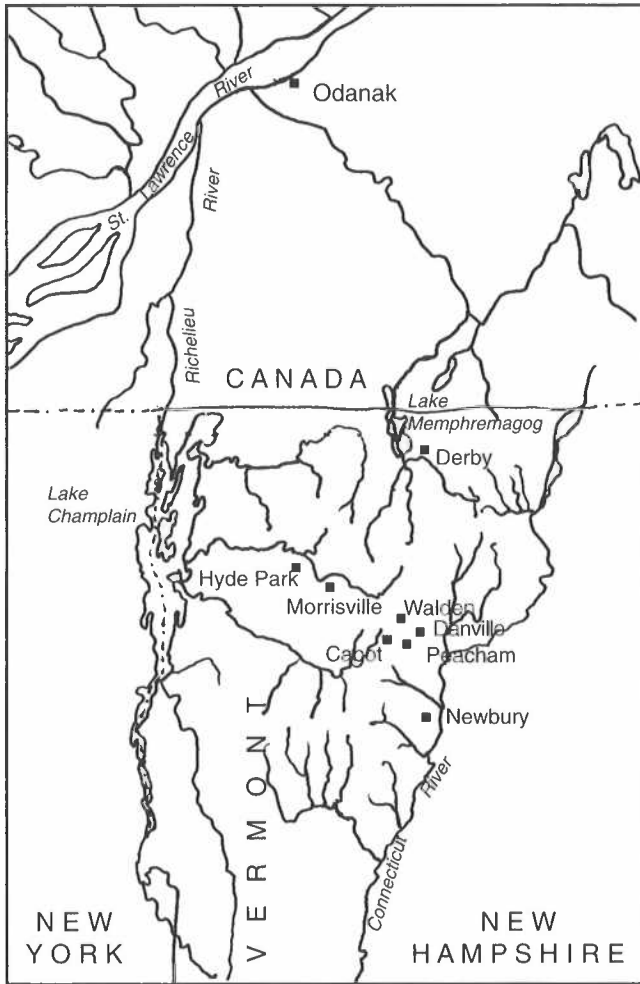
By KATHLEEN MCKINLEY HARRIS

The struggles between Native Americans and Europeans in the early days of European settlement in North America were long and harsh. We still feel their effects today. The struggles are not the whole story, however. Here in Vermont people in towns from Newbury to Johnson still tell stories about Joe and Molly, a couple who helped settlers before, during, and after the American Revolution.

We don't know Joe and Molly's real names. When Native Americans were baptized many of them took the names Mary and Joseph. (Molly is a nickname for Mary.) There are stories about Joes and Mollys in other parts of Vermont, too. Some people think the stories are all about the same people. Some say that none of them really existed. But this couple did exist, and we know quite a lot about them.

Joe and Molly grew up in St. Francis in lower Canada. It is called Odanak in Abenaki. Joe came there when he was about six years old. At that time the French controlled Canada. The English, who were at war with the French, had destroyed his village in Nova Scotia. We don't know where Molly was born.

In 1754 war broke out again between



Some of the places Joe and Molly lived.

England and France. The English called it the French and Indian War because many Native Americans sided with the French.

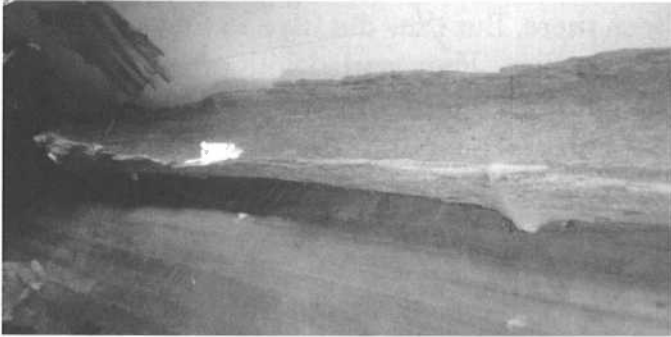
On October 4, 1759 an English troop called Rogers' Rangers raided Odanak. They killed many people and burned the town. Molly and Joe were not harmed. They may not even have been there. But they did have to find another place to live. They settled with others on land along the Connecticut River, near where Newbury is today and where there had once been an Abenaki village. They called the place The Coos, which means "place of the pines."

The Coos was beautiful. There was plenty of game for food—fish, moose, deer, wild birds, bear. There were beavers, otters, minks, and sables whose furs meant good trade. Because the land was so rich and beautiful European settlers also wanted to live there. This might have caused trouble as it did in other places. But in The Coos the Native Americans and the settlers got along well.

When the American Revolution began in 1775 Joe, who hated the English, and others from The Coos served as scouts in the colonial army. One of Joe's friends was General Jacob Bayley. The general spent his own money on food and clothing for Joe and Molly and other Native Americans. In return Joe and the others protected Bayley from the British, who had offered an award for his capture. They also

showed him Abenaki trails his troops could use.

It is said that during the Revolution Joe and Molly walked and canoed all the way to Newburgh, New York to meet George Washington and shake his hand. We don't know if they actually made the trip, but the story shows



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This dugout canoe, believed to have belonged to Joe, is on view at the DAR House in Newbury. It is more than 20 feet long. Another is in the Noyes House Museum in Morrisville.

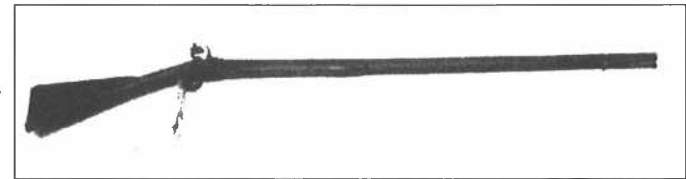
that people knew how strongly they felt about the Americans' fight for freedom.

Joe and Molly did not stay in one place for long. They lived in Danville, Derby, Walden, Morrisville, Hyde Park, Cabot, Peacham, and other places. It is said that for six weeks they shared a one-room cabin with John McDaniels and his wife, the first European settlers in Hyde Park. Joe and Molly also helped Jedediah and Elizabeth Hyde, when they settled in Hyde Park. Joe worked on the farm.

Molly helped with housework and the children.

Joe helped the settlers in other ways as well. He was a great hunter. During one terrible winter when there was little food Joe gave the Hydes a deer. They shared it with their neighbors. Another time he shot a moose and gave meat to the settlers before he took any home to Molly. Joe also taught the settlers to catch fish. The story is that in the winter, when the fish moved slowly in the cold water, he could catch them in his bare hands.

Native Americans sometimes came looking for Joe and Molly. Perhaps they wanted them



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Joe's musket was found with him in the woods before he died. It was fired over his grave at his funeral. It now hangs in the DAR House in Newbury.

to go back to their village in Canada. Maybe they were unhappy that Joe had told the settlers about the Abenaki trails. Joe and Molly hid when they came. The Hydes hung a lantern from the top of their house as a warning. Once when someone came Elizabeth Hyde hung the lantern and then led the man away from where Joe was.

Folks say that Joe sometimes paid for his supplies with gold dust or gold nuggets. Men tried to follow him to find the gold, but Joe always lost them in the woods. The men hoped that if they got Joe drunk he would tell them where the gold was. He never did.

Despite the stories about gold, Joe and Molly were not rich. In fact in 1792 the Vermont Legislature passed a bill giving John McDaniels and Jedediah Hyde money to help support them. In 1801 there was another law passed for Joe's support only. Molly must have died by then.

Joe lived his last years with Frye Bayley, the general's nephew. On January 31, 1819 he went hunting. He did not come home that night. A search party found him the next day. His feet had frozen and he could not walk. He died 17 days later.

Most of the important men from Newbury and around came to Joe's funeral. In 1935 the people of Newbury put up a memorial stone to Joe in the Oxbow Cemetery. It is still there.

There is a pond in Danville named after Joe and a smaller one in Cabot named for Molly. It is said that they would shout back and forth to each other from the two ponds. This we know is not true. The ponds are too far apart. It may also be that the stories about Joe and Molly are about many people and not just these two. What is true is that all the stories about

Joe's memorial in Newbury is still decorated by members of the Newbury chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.



Kathleen McKinley Harris

them and the other Joes and Mollys in Vermont show how much they were loved, respected, and admired by their neighbors.

Rooting Around

Newbury is the beautiful old town on the upper Connecticut River where Joe and Molly lived part of their lives. The Newbury Historical Society has many old letters and papers. The cemetery that has Joe's marker has several other interesting grave markers. And if you can find someone there, you can see Joe's musket and canoe at the DAR House.

If you hear of any stories about Joe and Molly or other Native Americans in your area, please send them to us.