

A Guide to the

**ANCIENT AND HONORABLE ARTILLERY  
COMPANY  
OF  
MASSACHUSETTS**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts is the oldest *chartered* military organization in the western hemisphere. Its charter was granted in March 1638 by the Great and General Court of Massachusetts Bay and signed by Governor John Winthrop. The Company was given a charter by the Great and General Court as a volunteer militia company that would train on a regular basis to increase the readiness and military skills of the members. Its inherent mission was to prepare its members to serve as officers in the enrolled militia companies.

The Company was incorporated as *The Military Company of the Massachusetts*. Circa 1690 it began to be referred to as *the Artillery Company* and then the word *Honorable* was used along with *Artillery*. During an Election Day sermon the preacher used the term “*this ancient and honorable artillery*” and the name has been used since that time.

This booklet is intended as a short work of reference for both existing and prospective members, and as a souvenir for those who have an interest in the

Artillery Company. It explains how the Company works today referring to its customs and traditions.

## **History**

English settlers in Boston and other towns in the Massachusetts Bay Colony adopted the English militia system as their model for local defense. Every male colonist between the ages of 16 and 60 was required to possess arms and equipment and to drill with the town militia company. In 1636 town companies were assigned to three regional regiments. Several prominent men in Boston, all with military experience, agreed that another type of militia organization was needed to better prepare militiamen for the defense of the colony.

In 1637 these men petitioned the General Court for permission to organize a volunteer company that would enlist its own members, elect its officers and noncommissioned officers and prepare its own soldiers for commissions in the enrolled militia. Their model was the Honourable Artillery Company of London which many of the petitioners had served with prior to immigrating to Massachusetts. The original petition was not granted because the General Court perceived a threat to its authority from a military unit not under its direct control. With the threat of war with the Indians, the General Court changed its position and approved a charter on 13 March 1638 for the *Military Company of the Massachusetts*, as the Company was initially designated. This charter, still in effect, makes the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company the oldest chartered or volunteer military company in the United States and the Western Hemisphere.

The Charter allowed the Company to elect its officers and noncommissioned officers, allowed its privates to concurrently drill with their own town militia companies, gave the Ancients precedence over all other militia training and granted land for the Company's use. The Company immediately began organizing and equipping after receipt of the charter. The first Company election was held in June 1638 on Boston Common. Captain Robert Keayne was elected the first Captain Commanding. Since that first election, the Company has elected its officers and sergeants for one-year terms every first Monday of June (June Day) on the Boston Common.

The Company began training in earnest and became a school of military science and tactics for the militia. Drill was conducted several times a month to keep its members' military skills well-honed. While the threat of Indian attack was always in the background the first war that individual Ancients served in was totally unexpected. Several Ancients left Boston to return to England to serve in the Puritan Army during the English Civil War 1642-1651.

The Company continued to drill and to provide trained officers for the militia. This came to fruition during King Phillip's War 1675-1676 which was the most serious threat to the colony's existence when several Indian tribes attacked the English colonists. Company-trained officers played a vital role in the English victory.

In 1690 the Company was first called the *Artillery Company* meaning that it was a volunteer unit equipped with firearms. In time the Company was designated as the *Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company*, but was always organized as an infantry company. By the early 1700 the Company's mission evolved from a volunteer infantry unit to a ceremonial unit composed of active and retired militia officers. It had also been accorded status as the senior unit of the Massachusetts Militia with the privilege of marching ahead of all other units.

Boston was in turmoil in 1774 as its citizens and Crown officials were at loggerheads concerning the right of Parliament to tax the colonists. That autumn the British disarmed the Boston Regiment and the Ancients. The Company took no role in the outbreak of fighting on 19 April 1775 due to the British occupation of Boston which kept most members in the town. However, a few members managed to escape and join the Massachusetts Army and later the Continental Army. The Company suspended operations during the Revolutionary War since the militia was in constant active service.

The Company reorganized in 1786 along with other volunteer militia companies during Shay's Rebellion. The Company quickly purchased uniforms, equipment and arms and was prepared to take the field if called upon. During the 1787 Constitutional debates in Philadelphia concerning the future of the state militias, the Company was mentioned as a *prestigious volunteer militia unit*. In 1792, the Company's "ancient privileges" were guaranteed by the Federal Militia Act. These privileges continue today under Title 32, U.S. Code and Chapter 33, Massachusetts General Laws.

The Company's members took leadership positions in the Massachusetts Militia and many served on active duty in the fall of 1814 during the War of 1812 when Massachusetts was threatened with invasion by British forces. The Company had no direct role in the War with Mexico 1846-1848, however, individual members served on active duty with the 1<sup>st</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry.

The Civil War was a momentous event for both the nation and the Company. Just as in the Revolutionary War, Ancients volunteered for active service in dozens of Massachusetts regiments that the state fielded. All the militia units that had then shared the armory with the Ancients volunteered for active service and left the armory to the Company.

After the Civil War the criteria for membership changed. Veterans, regardless of rank, could join as well as patriotic men with no prior military service. Since then the Company has been comprised of both veterans and non-veterans.

The Company renewed its ties with its “parent” organization The Honourable Artillery Company of London in 1886. Since then, the two organizations have maintained a very close relationship with both organizations sharing visits of a regular basis.

Individual Ancients were mobilized for active service in the Spanish American War, World War I and World War II. Since 1945, individual Ancients have served on active duty in all of the nation’s wars. During WW II, the Ancients organized a wartime militia unit, *the Special Headquarters and Service Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, Massachusetts State Guard*. The unit was responsible for support units within the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division

The Company is still a military organization and is well known for the many parades and ceremonies that the organization participates in every year. It is less recognized for the considerable charitable activities it has conducted including support for the United Services Organization (USO), Toys for Tots, the Old North Church Foundation and other worthy organizations over the years. Also, the Company has visited dozens of countries and battlefields all over the world where Americans have fought and are buried during the Fall Field Day Tours of Duty in the role of good will ambassadors for the United States, Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the City of Boston. On several occasions the Company has purchased and installed monuments in various countries recognizing the service and sacrifice of the U.S. Armed Forces. The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company still plays a vital role in the ceremonial, patriotic and civic life of City of Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**Notable Dates:**

- 1637** Petition to General Court to establish a military company.
- 1638** Charter granted to form the Military Company of the Massachusetts.
- 1659** Company uses the new Town House as its Headquarters under the provisions of the will of Robert Keayne.
- 1686** Edmund Andros as Governor of New England disrupts

- life and government in Boston. Also interrupts the workings of the Company.
- 1690** First time the Company is called the “Artillery Company.”
  - 1711** The Town House burns and is replaced with a brick Town and Province house, now called The Old State House. It is also the Headquarters of the Company.
  - 1737** The Company referred to as this “ancient and honorable artillery.”
  - 1738** The centennial of the Company.
  - 1742** A new market building with a meeting room is built on the dock area. Peter Faneuil gave the money to have the building built and it was named Faneuil Hall in his honor.
  - 1746** Company transfers from Province House to Faneuil Hall.
  - 1763** End of French and Indian War will make unusual Demands on the colonies leading to the War of Independence. This will have an effect on the Company.
  - 1775** The War of Independence begins on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April. Many of the Company are called to duty in their respective militia units; a number serve in the Continental Army.
  - 1776** Declaration of Independence is read from the balcony of the State House by a member of the Company.
  - 1786** The Company meets for the first time since 1775.
  - 1792** Federal Militia Act of 1792 grants ancient privileges.
  - 1805** Faneuil Hall is too small for Town business and is enlarged to four times its original size. A fourth floor is added a drill hall for the militia of the Town including the Ancients.
  - 1814** War with Britain: Massachusetts Militia mobilized to defend the state.
  - 1838** Two hundredth anniversary of the Ancients.
  - 1846** War with Mexico: BG Caleb Chase of the Ancients

- has distinguished service.
- 1861** The beginning of the Civil War: Many members Enter and serve with the Union Army.
- 1885** The Ancients serve as escort to President Chester A. Arthur at the laying of the corner stone of the Washington Monument.
- 1886** The first anniversary of the Washington Monument Ceremony which began an annual celebration on Washington's Birthday, now Presidents Day.
- 1887** The first meeting with the Honourable Artillery Company of London.
- 1896** The Ancients in a large group sail to London for a visit to the Honourable Artillery Company.
- 1897** Faneuil Hall has a large restoration program. Ancients move out for a year.
- 1903** The Honourable Artillery Company visits the Ancients in Boston, a gala affair.
- 1912** The Ancients once again sail to England, visit London, then to Windsor to place a plaque on the birthplace of Robert Keayne.
- 1917** United States enters World War I begins Many Ancients are called to duty.
- 1937** Many of the Ancients travel to London for the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Honourable Artillery Company.
- 1938** Many of the London Company travel to Boston for the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ancients. They plant a tree on Boston Common to commemorate the event.
- 1941** World War II begins for the United States. Once again many Ancients are called to duty. Those left at home do their duty to support the war. A 1943 War Bond drive results in the Ancients buying two bombers that saw service in Europe. The Ancients organize a Massachusetts State Guard unit.
- 1954** For the first time the Ancients travel by Airplane for their Fall Field Day Tour of Duty.
- 1975** The Bicentennial of the United States is celebrated by

the Ancients. They escort Queen Elizabeth II on her visit to Boston.

- 1985** The 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ancients. The Honourable Artillery Company travels to Boston.
- 1990** Once again the Ancients move from their Headquarters because of a restoration project for Faneuil Hall. They are stationed at the U.S. Coast Guard Station on Commercial Street.
- 1992** Back home again.
- 2012** First women members enrolled in the Company.

**Roll of the Members Awarded the Medal of Honor:**

Major George H. Maynard, USA, Fredericksburg, VA, 1862  
Corporal Lowell M. Maxham, USA, Marye's Heights, VA 1863  
Colonel Francis S. Hasseltine, USA, Magnolia Bay, TX 1863  
Lieutenant George C. Harkins, USA Petersburg, VA 1865  
Sergeant Charles A. MacGillivray, USA, Woelfling, France 1945  
Captain George L. Street III, USN, Qualpart, Korea 1945  
Captain Thomas J. Hudner, Jr., USN, Chosin Reservoir, Korea 1950  
Captain Thomas G. Kelley, USN. Ong Muong Canal, Vietnam, 1969

**Headquarters:**

The Town House was built in 1659 through the generosity of Robert Keayne, the first commander of the Company. His will stipulated that a space be set aside for the use of the Military Company. The Town House burned in 1711 and was rebuilt in 1713 to house both the Town and Provincial governments. The Town honored Keayne's will by having a space set aside for the Artillery Company. In 1742 through the generosity of Peter Faneuil, a market place was designed and built by John Smibert at the Town dock, an open market on the ground floor with a meeting room and offices above it. By 1746 space in the Town House was at a premium so the Ancients were transferred to Faneuil Hall. None of these buildings were large enough to allow the Company to have an Armory or meeting room. They generally held their meetings at a tavern in town and drilled on the Common. In 1773 with British soldiers encamped on the Common, the Ancients performed their drill on Copp's Hill.

By 1800 it became apparent that Faneuil Hall was too small to hold meetings. In 1805 Charles Bulfinch designed a new building four times the size of the original. A fourth floor was added about which Bulfinch wrote: "Above the

Great Hall is another, 76 foot long and 30 feet wide devoted to the exercise of the different military corps of the town with a number of apartments on each side for depositing their arms, where those of several companies are arranged and kept in perfect order. The military hall is lighted by large semi-circular windows at the ends, and lutherns through the roof at the sides.” The Ancients occupied one of the apartments. An 1853 plan of the floor shows the Company in the apartment that is now the curator’s room.

By 1880 all other militia units had moved from Faneuil Hall, leaving the Ancients the sole occupants of the fourth floor. It was at this time that a Committee of the Museum and Library was formed. By 1895 the building was near to collapse. It was decided to restore the sagging structure. A new foundation was put in place and the roof taken off to remove all the wooden beams. They were replaced with steel trusses. The 30 foot exercise or armory was now widened to 48 feet and the apartments made smaller. Now all of the walls of the building lined up. The new walls of the armory matched the Ionic and Doric columns of the second and third floors.

To celebrate this new home, the Company commissioned five Boston artists to do thirteen historical paintings of Massachusetts significance. They still hang on the walls of the Armory.

In 1924 another restoration was done to upgrade the electrical system and in 1937 a one and one half man elevator was installed from the second to the fourth floor. In 1937 bronze plaques were attached to the stairway to the “Captain’s Quarters” and in 1967 the flags were added to complete the “Stairway to the Constitution.”

Another major restoration of the building forced the Company to move from its Headquarters to the Coast Guard Station on Commercial Street from September 1990 to September 1992. The Company returned to a clean, climate controlled Armory and headquarters.

## **CEREMONIAL**

### **June Day:**

Although the anniversary of the Charter is March, the most significant ceremonial occurs in June. On the first Monday in June the Ancients hold a Drum Head Election on Boston Common. The tradition began with the First Muster in 1638. The sequence of events has changed over the years, but the theme of the day has always remained the same.



The day begins with an officers' call followed by a wreath laying ceremony at the tomb of Captain Robert Keayne. There is a luncheon at the Armory beginning at 11:00 AM for the Ancients and all Parade participants. At 12:30 PM the Parade forms on North and Congress Streets then marches to an historic church for a religious service and the Drum Head Election Day sermon. When the service concludes, the Parade reforms and marches to the Boston Common where the incumbent elected Officers appear before the Governor, our Commander-in-Chief, or his designated representative, to surrender their commissions. The newly elected Officers then appear before the Governor to receive their commissions for the coming year. Following this ceremony the Adjutant officiates at the exchange of authority of the twelve elected Sergeants of the Company. The Ceremony concludes with a pass in review by the Company and participants. The day ends with an anniversary banquet at a nearby hotel.

#### **Fall Field Day Tour of Duty:**

This is the second most important ceremonial duty of the Ancients. Its origin was the fall muster day required of all colonial militia. This was a training day. The Company conducted their training on Boston Common before and after the American Revolution.

By 1834 the Company conducted training in nearby towns such as: Newton, South Boston or Cambridge, In 1847 they traveled to Concord, NH. In 1883 they traveled to New York City and in 1887 to Montreal, Canada. These were no longer one day training excursions, but became four or five day events. Usually the Company exchanged military courtesies with the local militia or military unit. They would recognize some outstanding symbol of military significance in the area, have a banquet and then return home.

In 1911 the Company left the continent to sail to Bermuda for their tour of duty. In 1896 the Company had travelled to England to visit the Honourable Artillery Company however this was not the Fall Field day Tour of Duty which was held at Baltimore in September of that year. It was in 1954 that the Company flew for the first time to London.

## Heraldry, Customs and Traditions

### Coat of Arms:

The Coat of Arms for the Ancients first appeared in the Annual Records in 1900. Its description was printed in the Rules and Regulations of 1940. It is designed for ornamental and decorative uses.

Description: Shield of azure (blue); An eagle displayed, argent (silver),  
*Supporters*, Dexter (right): An Indian, in Dexter hand a bow; sinister an arrow, barb pointing down, all proper colors. Sinister: an eagle with wings elevated; proper colors. Above the shield is the helmet of the Esquires with suitable mount. Crest, out of a mural coronet, a fire beacon or (gold).

**Motto:** *Facta non Verba* Deeds not Words

### The Company Seal:

It first appeared in the Annual records of 1880 and is recorded in the Rules and Regulations in 1908.

The Corporate seal of the Company shall be circular, one inch and fourteen sixteenths in diameter. In the center or (gold). On the shield a man in 1638 armor grasping in the dexter hand an espontoon vested (sleeve off), azure, grasping a sword to strike, hilt, or (gold), blade, argent.

The outer circle should contain the name of the organization "Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, Massachusetts"

The ground of the inner circle should be azure and the date of the organization "16" on the dexter and "38" on the sinister side of the shield.

### Elected Officers:

The administration and functional affairs of the Company are governed by the Standing Committee under the direction of the Captain Commanding who is elected each year by the body. The Standing Committee operates under the Rules and Regulations of the Company.

The members of this committee are:

Captain Commanding	the Chairman
First Lieutenant	the Vice Chairman
Second Lieutenant	

Personnel Adjutant & Clerk the Secretary  
Chairman and Secretary of the Trustees of the Permanent Fund  
Chairman and Secretary of the Finance Committee  
Chairman and Secretary of the Military Museum and Library Committee  
Paymaster  
Representative of the Society of Past Commanders

Other elected officers who serve for one year terms are:

Quartermaster  
Commissary Officer  
Paymaster  
Personnel Adjutant & Clerk

Six Sergeants of Infantry and six Sergeants of Artillery are elected yearly. They serve to assist the Captain Commanding and to conduct social functions for the Company.

The three elected committees are:

Trustees of the Permanent Fund (5)  
Finance Committee (5)  
Military Museum and Library Committee (5)

All members of these committees serve a term of five years.

All elected members maintain their positions from a direct vote of the body of the Company.

#### **Medals and Ribbons:**

Each member is entitled to wear the Ancients membership medal, the Centennial Legion of Historic Military Commands medal and ribbons earned by Fall Field Day Tour of Duty service. In time a member is allowed to wear a long service medal. Those who have earned Federal, state or foreign military awards and decorations are entitled to wear them on their Ancients uniforms.

#### **Religious Services:**

The two primary religious services conducted by the Ancients occur on June Day and on the Fall Field day Tour of Duty. The Election Day sermon has been a part of Ancients tradition since 1638. The Company has three chaplains who perform other religious services during the year.

## **Dress Regulations**

### **Order of Dress:**

1. **Special Full Dress Uniform**

Used by all members on special occasions. A full dress uniform as prescribed except that the belt is not worn. White dress shirt with cuffs, white turn down collar, black bow tie.

2. **Full Dress Uniform**

Black contemporary full dress military coat. Black military peaked cap with red/gold band and Company coat of arms. Trousers are black with red stripe. White shirt, black tie, black socks and black military oxford shoes.

Officers wear gold shoulder knots and other ranks wear red shoulder knots with AHAC brass.

Officers wear a gold belt while other ranks wear a red and yellow garrison belt with the same AHAC brass buckle.

3. **Mess Dress Uniform**

Mess waist jacket and black vest. Jacket is black with red lapels. Trousers are black with red outseam stripe. White formal dress pleated shirt with French cuffs, gold links and studs, black bow tie and miniature medals.

4. **Summer Dress Uniform**

United States Navy officers' style white shirt with gold shoulder knots or red shoulder knots as appropriate, Black peaked cap as above or optional black "overseas style" cap with Company insignia on left side. Black trousers with belt loops and red stripe on outseam. Black military web belt with brass buckle.

5. **Undress Uniform**

For all members; a single breasted midnight blue blazer with Coat of Arms on left breast pocket. Bankers gray trousers, white dress shirt, Company regimental striped tie and black shoes.

## **Membership**

### **Honorary:**

Conferred upon any person, U.S. citizenship not required, with the consent of the Standing Committee and affirmative vote of the Body.

### **Honorary, ex officio:**

Conferred upon the Governor of Massachusetts as Commander-in-Chief  
The Adjutant General of the Commonwealth Massachusetts  
The Mayor of the City of Boston.

### **Regular:**

Every active member, not qualified as a Life Member, shall be a Regular Member. A member must be of majority and a citizen of the United States. Regular membership is limited to 550 members. Regular Members must be invited to join the Company.

### **Life Member:**

Every active member who has completed the requisite time and service requirements as prescribed by the Rules and Regulations of the Company shall be a Life Member. There is no limit to the number of Life Members.

### **Right of Descent Members:**

Any member of the Company or any citizen of the United States who is a direct descendent member of the Company whose service dates back prior to 1738, upon verification of the line of descent, may apply for membership into the Company. Upon review of the application he may, by vote of the Body, become a non-voting member of the Company. If the ROD member resides outside of New England he is an inactive member and is exempt from the annual assessment.

### **Non-Resident Member:**

Any member whose legal residence is outside of New England may request non-resident status as an inactive member. Although a non-resident member, he shall be liable to a special annual assessment.

### **Armed Forces Member:**

Any member of the Company who is a member of the Armed Forces of the United States or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts serving on active duty for more than 90 consecutive days may apply for inactive status within the Company.

### **Past Commanders:**

After a member has served as Captain Commanding of the Company he is considered a Past Commander and is accorded all the courtesies of his rank and status. The first Captain Commanding and the first Past Commander was Captain Robert Keayne, founder of this Company in 1638.

### **Community Service**

In addition to the ceremonial and patriotic duties the Company performs for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the City of Boston, The Company also serves the role of “Ambassadors of Good Will” for the Commonwealth and for the United States on its annual Fall Field Day Tours of Duty. Special attention is given to honoring the sacrifice of U.S. and allied service members at home and abroad.

The Company is also very supportive of several charitable causes, including the New England Chapter of the United Services Organization (USO), The U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys-for-Tots program and the New England Shelter for Homeless Veterans. The Company has also been quite supportive of the Massachusetts National Guard’s Family Support Program and other specific charitable causes that are related to the historic missions of the Company.

The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company is proud of its tradition of service to the City of Boston, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the United States of America since its organization in 1638 at Boston. Our members continue to make significant contributions to our society as members of the military, the business community, the clergy, academia and the learned professions striving to lead lives of *Facta non Verba*, Deeds not Words!