

Colonel Israel Angell

Israel Angell was a descendant in the fifth generation of Thomas Angell, who came to Providence with Roger Williams; he was the son of Oliver and Naomi (Smith) Angell, and was born in that part of the town of Providence now included in North Providence, Aug. 24, 1740.

He received more than the usual education afforded the youth of that period, for his mother had been a teacher in one of the country schools and was able to give her son many advantages of learning. He seems to have been conversant with scientific subjects, was particularly fond of natural history, and in his later years made many notes on this branch of science as he traveled through sections of the country on public business. He is also said to have been an enthusiastic student of astronomy.

At the very beginning of the troubles with the mother country Israel Angell took an active part. When the army of observation was ordered raised by the General Assembly of Rhode Island in 1775, he was commissioned Major of the regiment commanded by Col. Daniel Hitchcock. The regiment to which he was attached formed a part of the American army laying siege to Boston and bore its part in the events which subsequently transpired.

Upon the formation of the Second Rhode Island Regiment Daniel Hitchcock was elected Colonel and Israel Angell Lieutenant-Colonel, and the regiment was dispatched to join the grand army under Washington.

Upon the death of Colonel Hitchcock the command of the regiment was given to Angell, his commission being dated Jan. 13, 1777; this position he held until the First and Second Regiments were consolidated.

Colonel Angell participated in the battles of the Brandywine and Red Bank and was with the army during the terrible winter of 1777-1778 at Valley Forge.

His regiment bore a conspicuous part in the battle of Monmouth, and soon after this engagement he with his regiment was detached from the main army and sent to Rhode Island to unite with General Sullivan in the operations against the enemy at Newport, RI. For distinguished services at the battle of Springfield, June 23, 1780, he was the subject of special mention by General Washington in a letter to Governor Greene of Rhode Island.

Upon the consolidation of the two Rhode Island regiments Colonel Angell retired from the position he had held so long.

Upon retiring from military life Colonel Angell returned to his home in the town of Johnston, where he carried on his farm and followed his trade as a cooper; at the same time he was granted a license to keep a public house.

His tavern was a popular place of resort and was widely known for its excellence and hospitality.

Late in life he moved into the town of Smithfield, where he died May 31, 1832, in his ninety-second year. He is described by one who remembered him as of "medium height, light complexion, auburn hair surmounted by a wig, blue eyes, a strong Roman nose, and straight as a ramrod."

Colonel Angell was three times married and is said to have contemplated a fourth venture when death terminated his life. In love and in war Colonel Angell was a conspicuous figure.

"He had seventeen children, eleven by his first wife and six by the second, and of the seventeen, thirteen reached maturity and eight became octogenarians."

He was buried in the family graveyard on his old farm in Johnston on the South Scituate road.

Reference:

Angell, Israel. Diary of Colonel Israel Angell Commanding the Second Rhode Island Continental Regiment during the American Revolution 1778-1781. Edited by Edward Field. Providence: Preston and Rounds, 1899.