

Nathaniel Coffin, of the American branch, was a merchant possessed of some means, and cashier of customs at Boston, Massachusetts. He took the side of the crown during the American Revolution, suffered greatly from loss of property, and was never reimbursed. He had four sons and several daughters. The eldest son, Nathaniel, a successful lawyer, having, with his brother next to him in age, assisted in cutting down a liberty pole, was obliged to seek safety in flight from Boston. The fourth son, Isaac, died a British Admiral and Baronet in 1839, at the ripe age of eighty-two years.

John, the third son of the elder Nathaniel, and the subject of this sketch, was born in Boston in 1756. He took to the sea at an early age, and evinced such aptitude for his calling that he became a master mariner when he was but eighteen years old. In 1775 his vessel was employed as a transport, and having on board the greater part of a regiment and also General Howe, reached Boston on the fifteenth of June. The troops were landed under Bunker Hill, and the battle, bearing that name, having commenced, the Colonel invited the young sailor "to come up and see the fun." He promptly accepted the invitation, and, armed with the only available weapon, a tiller, soon secured the musket of an American soldier, whom he had elled to the earth, and used it to good effect. Indeed his courage and capacity were so conspicuous on this occasion that General Gage, to whom he was presented at the close of the action, made him an ensign on the field, and soon after he was promoted to a lieutenancy. He had been promised by Sir William Howe that, if he would go to New York and raise four hundred men for the royal service, they should be placed under his command. He raised and commanded a company in the King's Orange Rangers about the beginning of the year 1776, and he served in this corps until 1778, when he exchanged into the New York Volunteers. He took part in the battles of Long Island in 1777, of German Town and Saint Lucie in 1778, of Briar's Creek in 1779, and of Camden in 1780. There are no extant details of his exploits in these, but in the accounts of the battles of Hampton, Hobkirk's Hill and Eutaw Springs in 1781 his heroic conduct is fully recognized and described. In his obituary notice in a Saint John paper it is also stated that he had taken part in the battle of Savannah and in the action at Cross Creek. Coffin's cavalry, which derived its name from him as its leader, was generally dreaded and