



The Florida Society of the Sons of the American Revolution

Fort Lauderdale Chapter Newsletter



website: www.sarfl.weebly.com

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February Message from the President:

Dear Compatriots,

At last month's meeting on January 18 we welcomed our state president and vice president as well as the presidents of the Miami and Palm Beach chapters.

The Honorable Bernard W. Wolff, Regional Vice President, chaired our meeting and presided over the election of our officers. The officers were inducted by the State President, William Lee Popham, Sr.

A cordial invitation was extended to us to join our compatriots of the Miami chapter on February 22 for their Annual President's Day Luncheon and induction of officers. I plan to attend.

The agenda of our upcoming meeting on February 15 will include a program of "The Lesser Known Facts of George Washington."

Looking forward to seeing you then.

Tom Shepherd, President



The Fort Lauderdale Chapter awarded four Good Citizenship certificates and a Good Citizenship Medal to five cadets from the Pembroke Pines Civil Air Patrol Squadron at their annual awards ceremonies.

The Battle of Oriskany Wednesday, August 6, 1777 Overview

The fight was for the continent. The strategy embraced the lines from Boston to the mouth of the Chesapeake, from Montreal even to Charleston. Montgomery's invasion of Canada, although St. John's and Montreal were taken, failed before Quebec, and the retreat of the American forces gave Burgoyne the base for his comprehensive campaign. Howe had been compelled to give up New England, which contained nearly one-third of the population and strength of the colonies. The center of attack and of defense was the line of New York and Philadelphia. From their foothold at New York, on the one hand, and Montreal on the other, the British commanders aimed to grind the patriots of the Mohawk valley between the upper and nether mill stones. The design was to cut New England off from the other States, and to seize the country between the Hudson and Lake Ontario as the vantage ground for sweeping and decisive operations. This was the purpose of the wedge which Burgoyne south to drive through the heart of the Union. In the beginning of that fateful August, Howe held all the country about New York, including the islands, and the Hudson up to Peekskill; the British forces also commanded the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario, and their southern shores, finding no opposition north of the Mohawk and Saratoga lake. The junction of Howe and Burgoyne would have rendered their armies masters of the key to the military position. This strip of country from the Highlands of the Hudson to the head of the Mohawk was the sole shield against such concentration of British power. Once lost it would become a sword to cut the patriots into fragments.

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NEXT MEETING - February 15, 2020

Davie Outback Steak House
2725 South University Dr. Davie, Florida 33328

Future Dates:
December Wreaths Across America

Saturday, 02/15/2020
Saturday, 03/21/2020
Saturday, 04/18/2020
Saturday, 05/16/2020

Time: 11:30 AM social gathering; Lunch at noon

FOR RESERVATIONS CALL: 954-559-3202
or e-mail Joe Motes at: joemotes@aol.com



During our January meeting we held our Installation of Officers and were Installed by S.A.R. Florida President Lee Popham.

They possessed it by no certain tenure. Two months later Governor Clinton and General Putnam lost their positions on the Hudson. Thus far Burgoyne's march had been one of conquest. His capture of Ticonderoga had startled the land. The frontier fort at the head of the Mohawk was to cost him the column on whose march he counted so much.

Synopsis

The corps before Fort Stanwix was formidable in every element of military strength. The expedition with which it was charged was deemed by the war secretary at Whitehall of the first consequence, and it had received as marked attention as any army which King George ever let loose upon the colonists. For its leader Lieutenant-Colonel Barry St. Leger had been chosen by the king himself, on Burgoyne's nomination. He deserved the confidence, if we judge by his advance, by his precautions, by his stratagem at Oriskany, and the conduct of the siege, up to the panic at the rumor that Arnold was coming. In the regular army of England he became an ensign in 1756, and coming to America the next year he had served in the French war, and learned the habits of the Indians, and of border warfare. In some local sense, perhaps as commanding this corps, he was styled a brigadier. His regular rank was Lieutenant-Colonel of the thirty-fourth regiment. In those days of trained soldiers it was a marked distinction to be chosen to select an independent corps on important service. A wise commander, fitted for border war, his order of march bespeaks him. Skillful in affairs, and scholarly in accomplishments, his writing prove him. Prompt, tenacious, fertile in resources, attentive to detail, while master of the whole plan, he would not fail where another could have won. Inferior to Se. Leger in rank, but superior to him in natural powers and personal magnetism, was Joseph Brant -- Thayendanegea -- chief of the Mohawks. He had been active in arraying the six Nations on the side of King George, and only the Oneidas and Tuscaroras had refused to follow his lead. He was not thirty-five years of age; in figure the ideal Indian, tall and spare and lithe and quick; with all the genius of his tribe, and the training gained in Connecticut schools, and in the family of Sir William Johnson; he had been a lion in London, and flattered at British headquarters in Montreal. Among the Indians he was preeminent, and in any circle he would have been conspicuous.

As St. Leger represented the regular army of King George, and brant the Indian allies, Sir John Johnson led the regiments which had been organized from the settlers in the Mohawk Valley. He had inherited from his father, Sir William, the largest estate held on the continent by any individual, William Penn excepted. He had early taken sides with the king against the colonists, and having entered into a compact with the patriots to preserve peace and remain at Johnstown, he had violated his promise, and fled to Canada. He came now with a sense of personal wrong, to recover his possessions and to resume the almost royal sway which he had exercised. He at this time held a commission as colonel in the British army, to raise and command forces raised among the royalists of the valley. Besides these was Butler, -- John Butler, a brother-in-law of Johnson; lieutenant-colonel by

rank, rich and influential in the valley, familiar with the Indians and a favorite of them, shrewd and daring and savage, already the father of that son Walter, who was to be the scourge of the settlers, and with him to render ferocious and bloody the border war. He came from Niagara, and was now in command of Tory rangers.

The forces were like the leaders. It has been the custom to represent St. Leger's army as a "Motley crowd." On the contrary it was a picked force, especially designated by orders from headquarters in Britain. He enumerates his "artillery, the thirty-fourth and the King's regiment, with the Hessian riflemen and the whole corps of Indians," with him, while his advance, consisting of a detachment under Lieutenant Bird, had gone before, and "the rest of the army, led by Sir John Johnson," was a day's march in the rear. Johnson's whole regiment was with him, together with Butler's Tory rangers, with at least one company of Canadians. The country from Schoharie, westward, had been scoured of royalists to add to this column. For such an expedition, the force could not have been better chosen. The pet name of the "King's regiment" is significant. The artillery was such as could be carried by boat, and adapted to the sort of war before it. It had been especially designated from Whitehall. The Hana Chasseurs were trained and skillful soldiers. The Indians were the terror of the land. The Six Nations had joined the expedition in full force except the Oneidas and the Tuscaroras. With the latter tribes the influence of Samuel Kirkland had overborne that of the Johnson's, and the Oneidas and the Tuscaroras where by their peaceful attitude more than by hostility useful to Congress to the end. The statement that two thousand Canadians accompanied St. Leger as axe men is no doubt an exaggeration; but, exclusive of such helpers and of noncombatants, the corps counted not less than seventeen hundred fighting men. King George could not then have sent a column better fitted for its task, or better equipped, or abler led, or more intent on achieving all that was imposed upon it. Leaving Montreal, it stated on the nineteenth of July from Buck Island, its rendezvous at the entrance of Lake Ontario. It had reached Fort Stanwix without the loss of a man, as if on a summer's picnic. It had come through in good season. Its chief never doubted that he would make quick work with the Fort. He had even cautioned Lieutenant Bird who led the advance, lest he should rise the seizure with his unaided detachment. When his full force appeared, his faith was sure that the fort would "fall without a single shot." So confident was he that he sent a dispatch to Burgoyne on the fifth of August, assuring him that the fort would be his directly, and they would speedily meet as victors at Albany. General Schuyler had in an official letter expressed a like fear.

St. Leger was therefore surprised as well as annoyed by the news that the settlers on the Mohawk had been aroused, and were marching in haste to relieve the fort. He found that his path to join Burgoyne was to be contested. He watched by skillful scouts the gathering of the patriots; their quick and somewhat irregular assembling; he knew of their march from Fort Dayton, and their halt at Oriskany. Brant told him that they advanced, as brave, untrained militia, without throwing out skirmishers, and with Indian guild the Mohawk chose the pass in which an ambush

should be set for them. The British commander guarded the way for several miles from his position by scouts within speaking distance of each other. He knew the importance of his movement, and he was guilty of no neglect.

From his camp at Fort Stanwix St. Leger saw all, and directed all. Sir John Johnson led the force thrown out to meet the patriots, with Butler as his second, but Brant was its controlling head. The Indians were most numerous: "the whole corps, " a "Large body," St. Leger testifies. And with the Indians he reports were "some troops." The presence of Johnson, and of Butler, as well as of Claus and Watts, of Captains Wilson, Hare and McDonald, the chief royalists of the valley, proves that their followers were in the fight. Butler refers to the New Yorkers whom we know as Johnson's Greens, and the Rangers, as in the engagement in large numbers. St. Leger was under the absolute necessity of preventing the patriot force from attaching his successfully. He could not do less than send every available man out to meet it. Quite certainly the choicest of the army were taken from the dull duty of the siege for this critical operation. They left camp at night and lay above and around the ravine at Oriskany, in the early morning of the sixth of August. They numbered not less than twelve hundred men under chosen cover.

The coming of St. Leger had been known for weeks. Burgoyne had left Montreal in June, and the expedition by way of Lake Ontario, as the experience of a hundred years prophesied, would respond to his advance. Colonel Gansevoort had appealed to the Committee of Safety for Tryon county, for help. Its chairman was Nicholas Herckheimer, (known to us as Herkimer,) who had been appointed a brigadier-general by congress in the preceding autumn. (His commission by the New York convention bears the date of September 5, 1776.) His family was large, and it was divided in the contest. A brother was captain with sire John Johnson, and a brother-in-law was one of the chief of the loyalists. He was now forty-eight years of age, short, slender, of dark complexion, with black hair and bright eyes. He had German pluck and leadership, but he had also German caution and deliberation. He foresaw the danger, and had given warning to General Schuyler at Albany. On the seventeenth of July had had issued a proclamation, announcing that the enemy, two thousand strong, was at Oswego, and that as soon as he could approach, every male person being in health, and between sixteen and sixty years of age, should immediately be ready to march against him. Tryon county had strong appeals for help also from cherry Valley and Unadilla; General Herkimer had been southward at the close of June to check operations of the Tories and Indians under Brant; and Frederick Sammons had been sent on a scouting expedition to the Black river country, to test the rumors that an invasion from Canada was to be made from that direction.

The danger from these directions delayed and obstructed recruiting for the column against St. Leger. The stress was great, and Herkimer was bound to keep watch south and north as well as west. He waited only to learn where need was greatest, and he went thither. On the thirtieth of July, a letter from Thomas Spencer, a half-breed Oneida, read on its way to General Schuyler, made known the advance of St. Leger. Herkimer's order was promptly issued, and soon brought in eight hundred men.

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Sons of the American Revolution
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They were nearly all by blood Germans and low Dutch, with a few of other nationalities. The roster, so far as can now be collected, indicates the presence of persons of English, Scotch, Irish, Welsh, and French blood, but these are exceptions, and the majority of the force was beyond question German. They gathered from their farms and clearings, carrying their equipments with the. They met at Fort Dayton, near the mouth of the West Canada Creek. This post was held at the time by a part of colonel Wesson's Massachusetts regiment, also represented in the garrison at Fort Stanwix. The little army was divided into four regiments or battalions. The first, which Herkimer had once commanded, was now led by Colonel Ebenezer Cox, and was from the district of Canajoharie; of the second, from Palatine, Jacob Klock was colonel; the third was under Colonel Frederick Visscher, and came from Mohawk; the fourth, gathered from German flats and Kingsland, Peter Bellinger commanded.

Counsels were divided whether they should await further accessions, or hasten to Fort Stanwix Prudence prompted delay. St. Leger's force was more than double that of Herkimer; it might be divided, and while one-half occupied the patriot column, the Indians under Tory lead might hurry down the valley, gathering reinforcements while they ravaged the homes of the patriots. The blow might come from Unadilla, where Brant had been as late as the early part of that very July. Herkimer, at Fort Dayton, was in position to turn in either direction. But the way of the Mohawk was the natural and traditional warpath.

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The patriots looked to Fort Stanwix as their defense. They started on the fourth, crossed the Mohawk where is not Utica, and reached Whitestown on the fifth. Here it was probably that a band of Oneida Indians joined the column. From this point or before Herkimer sent an express to Colonel Gansevoort arranging cooperation. He was to move forward when three cannon signaled that aid was ready. The signal was not heard; the messenger had been delayed. His chief advisors, including Colonel Cox and Paris, the latter a member of the Committee of Safety, urged quicker movement. Fort Stanwix might fall while they were delaying, and the foe could then turn upon them. Herkimer was taunted as a coward and a Tory. His German phlegm was stirred. He warned his impatient advisers that they would be the first in the face of the enemy to flee. He gave the order "march on!" Apprised of the ambush, his courage which had been assailed prevented the necessary precautions.

He led his little band on. If he had before been cautious, now he was audacious. His course lay on the south side of the river, avoiding its bends, where the country loses the general level which the rude road sought to follow, when it could be found. For three or four miles hills rose upon valleys, with occasional gullies. The trickling springs and the spring freshets had cut more than one ravine where even in the summer, the water still moistened the earth. These run toward the river, from southerly toward the north. Corduroy roads had been constructed over the marches. For this was the line of such travel as sought Fort Stanwix and the river otherwise than by boat. Herkimer had come to one of the deepest of these ravines, ten or twelve rods wide, running narrower up to the hills at the south, and broadening toward the Mohawk into the flat bottom land. Where the forests were thick, where the rude roadway ran down into the march, and the ravine closed like a pocket, he pressed his way. Not in soldierly order, not watching against the enemy, but in rough haste, the eight hundred marched. They reached the ravine at ten in the morning. The advance had gained the higher ground. Then as so often, the woods became alive. Black eyes flashed from behind every tree. Rifles blazed from a thousand unexpected coverts. The Indians rushed out hatchet in hand, decked in paint and feather. The brave band was checked. It was cut in two. The assailants aimed first of all to seize the supply train. Colonel Visscher, who commanded its rear guard, showed his courage before and after and doubtless fought well here, as the best informed descendants of other heroes of the battle believe. But his regiment, driven northward toward the river, was cut up or in great part captured with the supplies and ammunition. In the ravine and just west of it, Herkimer rallied those who stood with him. Back to back, shoulder to shoulder, they faced the foe. Where shelter could be had two stood tighter, so that one might fire while the other loaded.

Continued next month

