



REVOLUTIONARY WAR PATRIOTS BURIED IN BLAIR COUNTY TO BE HONORED BY CEREMONY

On May 10, 1997 the Blair County Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution will host a ceremony to present a plaque to the Blair County Commissioners. This will be the first of four such ceremonies which are planned for this and next year in Blair, Bedford, Huntingdon and Fulton Counties. It is the fulfillment of a project set in motion at the March 17, 1991 Quarterly Meeting of the Blair County Chapter. (It was at that Quarterly Meeting that the motion was proposed and passed to have the names of the Patriots buried within each of the counties embraced by the Blair County Chapter inscribed on plaques to be presented to those county courthouses.) The plaque to be presented in this first ceremony bears the names of ninety-five Patriots of the American Revolutionary War whose earthly remains were interred in the soil of Blair County. The ceremony will have two purposes: 1.) To pay homage to the memory of those Patriots buried within Blair County, and 2.) To present the plaque bearing the Patriots' names to the County of Blair to be displayed in the Court House for the benefit of the public.

The ceremony is slated to begin at 2:00pm and will be held in Courtroom #2 of the Blair County Courthouse (located at 423 Allegheny Street, Hollidaysburg).

A ceremony that will venerate our Patriot ancestors with dignity and honor is being planned. Although the ceremony will be hosted by the Blair County Chapter, SAR, the local DAR chapters have been invited to attend and participate. Betty Boslet, Regent of the Colonel John Proctor Chapter, DAR (and wife of SAR Compatriot Irvin J. Boslet), will present an address during the ceremony. Dawn Harpster, a member of the Adam Holliday Chapter, DAR will present a biographical sketch of one of the Patriots buried in Blair County: her ancestor, Jacob Crissman. Blair County Judge Norman D. Callan will also deliver a brief speech. Kelly Shaw, a direct-line descendant of one of the Patriots who will be honored (*i.e.* Jacob Stifler, Sr), will participate by singing a couple patriotic hymns. Jack Linderman, who participated in the grave dedication ceremony of James Crawford last year, will play two selections on the bagpipes. The Glades Rangers, a Revolutionary War reenactor troop from Somerset, will provide an honor guard for the American flag, and (if our request is approved) will fire a black powder musketry salute on the Court House grounds.

Various individuals who are involved in the government of Blair County have been invited to attend and participate in this ceremony. Those individuals include the three Blair County Commissioners, the four Blair County Judges, Senator Jubilerer and Representatives Geist and Stern. As of the date that this newsletter was prepared for distribution, Commissioners Gority and Eichelberger, along with Judge Callan, had expressed the fact that they are interested in attending the event, but Commissioner Ebersole and Senator Jubilerer had declined the invitation. The others have not yet responded.

The Patriots to whom we are paying homage with this ceremony come from two groups: indigenous Bedford County residents who homesteaded here prior to and during the Revolutionary War period (*i.e.* between 1766 and 1783) and those who had resided in other places but moved here after the War had ended.

Nine of the ninety-five Patriots who are buried in Blair County had homesteaded here prior to the Revolutionary War; they served in the companies raised in Bedford County for service in the militia and Continental Line; they continued to reside here after the War and were eventually buried here. Those nine indigenous Blair County Patriots included: Thomas Coleman, Andrew Devinney, Adam Holliday, John Holliday, William Holliday Jr, William Holliday Sr, Daniel Moore, Elijah Phillips and Jacob Schmitt Sr. Thomas Coleman served in the Bedford County Militia, but records are not available to record the company he served in. Andrew Devinney served in Captain Thomas Paxton's Company and later in the rank of Major of the 3rd Battalion of the Bedford County Militia. Adam Holliday served in Captain Thomas Paxton's Company of the Bedford County Militia. John Holliday served in Captain Robert Cluggage's Company of Colonel William Thompson's Battalion of Riflemen. William Holliday Jr served in Captain Thomas Paxton's Company of the Bedford County Militia and also served as one of the Bedford County Sub-Lieutenants. William Holliday Sr served as the Paymaster for the Bedford County Militia. Daniel Moore served in the Bedford County Militia, but the records do not exist to reveal which company he served in. Elijah Phillips served in his father, Captain William Phillips' Company of Rangers of the Bedford County Militia. Jacob Schmitt Sr served in a company of Rangers of the Bedford County Militia, but the available records do not reveal which company he served in.

The remainder of the Patriots buried in Blair County came from all over Pennsylvania and the surrounding provinces/states. The book I am currently working on gives each of these Patriots' war service record in detail, and those records take up over twenty pages. Rather than make this newsletter too large, I'll just mention a few.

At least nine Patriots to whom we can attach names were killed in the Engagement of Frankstown in June of 1781. They included John Conrad, John Downey Sr, Florence Grimes, James Henry, Joseph Martin, Henderson Murphy, Henry Tantlinger, John Thomas and William Tucker. Another, Richard Delapt, was mortally wounded in the ambush, was taken captive by the Indians and died a short distance from the scene of the engagement.

There was a man by the name of James Martin who resided in Centre County after the war and died in 1795. His body was originally buried in a cemetery near Bellefonte. Later his remains were removed from that cemetery and re-interred in the Logan Valley Cemetery here in Blair County.

One Patriot came from the province/state of New York: Timothy Van Scoyoc.

Three Patriots served in the Maryland Militia and later came to this region to homestead. They were Michael Dodson, Nicholas McGuire and John Shirley. Another Patriot, Frederick Yingling served on the Committee of Observation for Frederick County, Maryland.

Only one Patriot who is buried in Blair County soil served in the fledgling American Navy. Nicholas Nachbar served on the armed ship, *General Washington*. He had earlier been wounded at the battle of Brandywine.

The last individual to be mentioned is Patriot, Lemuel Root. Although the records to verify the claims about his war service cannot be located, he is believed to have participated in the Battle of Lexington on 19 April, 1775. He was laid to rest in the Antis Cemetery near Bellwood in 1850.

An Invitation

The invitation is extended to all Compatriot members of the Blair County Chapter, SAR and their families to attend the May 10th plaque dedication ceremony at the Blair County Court House. Please make an extra effort to attend the dedication ceremony in order to pay homage to all of the American Revolutionary War Patriots buried in Blair County.

2nd QUARTERLY MEETING

The 1st Quarterly Meeting of the Blair County Chapter, SAR (scheduled for January 18) had to be cancelled due to bad weather. Please plan on attending the 2nd Quarterly Meeting which is scheduled to be held at Kings Family Restaurant in Altoona on April 12, 1997, beginning at 12:00 noon.

A Chronology Of The Revolutionary War

with emphasis on Bedford County, Pennsylvania's role

Continued

The Question About Canada

The colonies which made up what is present-day Canada in 1775 included Quebec, Nova Scotia, Ile~St.~Jean (later called Prince Edward Island) and Newfoundland. The great expanse of land which is today composed of the province of Ontario was part of Spain's Louisiana territory. The provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Alberta and the Northwest Territories were largely unsettled despite being claimed by the Hudson Bay Company. The primary differences which separated these four "Canadian" colonies from the thirteen southern British colonies in 1775 were those of history and language.

The four northernmost British colonies were not really British at all. Their history was not that of colonization by Great Britain, but rather by France. Only the fortunes (or in their case, the misfortunes) of war brought Quebec and her sister French colonies into the British fold. The primary objective of the British in the American theatre of the French and Indian War had been the capture of the French colonies. When that objective was accomplished, the ownership of the land changed hands, but life for the residents went on pretty much as usual. Of course, the actions and dictates of the new masters (*i.e.* the British Parliament) would have had some effect on the residents, but overall they were seen more as nuisances rather than something to go to war over. The complaints and disagreements which the (British) citizens of the British Colonies might have had with their (British) Parliament were not shared by the citizens of the French Colonies in Canada. Besides those recent acts of Parliament, the history of the colonies to the north and west of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes had practically nothing in common with the colonies to the south and east.

It should also be noted that residing in the colony of Nova Scotia at the time of the commencement of hostilities in Massachusetts~Bay as a population of nearly 10,000 who had emigrated from the New England colonies during the 1760s. Although those Nova Scotia "Yankees" were ethnically British, they had missed most of the ideological changes that swept the British colonies during the fifteen years prior to Lexington's 'shot heard round the world'. As a result, despite their ancestral link to the British colonies, they remained, for the most part, apathetic toward the colonial quarrel with the mother country.

The delegates of the twelve British Colonies who met in Continental Congress at Philadelphia in 1774 made overtures to the Canadians to join them in their opposition toward the British Parliament. An *Address To The Inhabitants Of The Province Of Quebec* was drafted in October, 1774. In that address, the Congress of the thirteen British colonies called on the people of Quebec to look around them and see what was happening. The *Address* noted that: "*When the fortune of war, after a gallant and glorious refittance had incorporated you with the body of English subjects, we rejoiced in the truly valuable addition...expecting...our brave enemies would become our hearty friends...*" They wrote that they had hoped that the transference of the government would result in the Canadians enjoying "*the inestimable advantages of a free English constitution of government, which it is the privilege of all English subjects to enjoy...Little did we imagine that any succeeding Ministers would so audaciously and cruelly abuse the royal authority, as to withhold from you the fruition of the irrevocable rights, to which you were thus justly entitled.*" The *Address* went on to point out the basic rights which the Canadians (as "nouveau Englishmen") should have been entitled to, but were denied by the British Parliament. The *Address* closed by suggesting that the Canadians join the indigenous English colonies, "*That Almighty God may incline your minds to approve our equitable and necessary measures, to add yourselves to us, to put your fate, whenever you suffer injuries which you are determined to oppose, not on the small influence of your single province, but on the consolidated powers of North~America, and may grant to our joint exertions an event as happy as our cause is just...*" Letters of the same nature were addressed to the colonies of St.

~Jean, Nova Scotia, Georgia and East and West Florida "who have not deputies to represent them in this Congress". But other than Nova Scotia (and even then only Cumberland and Sunbury Counties), the Canadian colonies ignored their southern neighbors.

On 17 May, 1775, following the commencement of hostilities between the provincial militia and the British at Lexington and Concord, the delegates to the Second Continental Congress voted unanimously to cease all exportations to the colonies of Quebec, Nova Scotia, the Island of St.~Jean, Newfoundland, Georgia (except the Parish of St. John's which had already requested admittance of delegates to the Congress) and to East and West Florida. As was noted previously, the inhabitants of Passamaquaddy in the colony of Nova Scotia chose a committee of safety and requested admittance into the "association of the North Americans" in November of 1775.

On 26 May, 1775 the Continental Congress passed a resolution to draft a letter to the people of Canada. A committee composed of John Jay, Samuel Adams and Silas Deane drafted the letter as follows:

To the oppressed inhabitants of Canada.

FRIENDS AND COUNTRYMEN,

Alarmed by the designs of an arbitrary Ministry, to extirpate the Rights and liberties of all America, a sense of common danger conspired with the dictates of humanity, in urging us to call your attention, by our late address, to this very important object.

Since the conclusion of the late war, we have been happy in considering you as fellow-subjects, and from the commencement of the present plan for subjugating the continent, we have viewed you as fellow-sufferers with us. As we were both entitled by the bounty of an indulgent creator to freedom, and being both devoted by the cruel edicts of a despotic administration, to common ruin, we perceived the fate of the protestant and catholic colonies to be strongly linked together, and therefore invited you to join with us in resolving to be free, and in rejecting, with disdain, the fetters of slavery, however artfully polished.

We most sincerely condole with you on the arrival of that day, in the course of which, the sun could not shine on a single freeman in all your extensive dominion. Be assured, that your unmerited degradation has engaged the most unfeigned pity of your sister colonies: and we flatter ourselves you will not, by tamely bearing the yoke, suffer that pity to be supplanted by contempt.

When hardy attempts are made to deprive men of rights, bestowed by the almighty, when avenues are cut thro' the most solemn compacts for the admission of despotism, when the plighted faith of government ceases to give security to loyal and dutiful subjects, and when the insidious stratagems and manoeuvres of peace become more terrible than the sanguinary operations of war, it is high time for them to assert those rights, and, with honest indignation, oppose the torrent of oppression rushing in upon them.

By the introduction of your present form of government, or rather present form of tyranny, you and your wives and your children are made slaves. You have nothing that you can call your own, and all the fruits of your labour and industry may be taken from you, whenever an avaricious governor and a rapacious council may incline to demand them. You are liable by their edicts to be transported into foreign countries to fight Battles in which you have no interest, and to spill your blood in conflicts from which neither honor nor emolument can be derived: Nay, the enjoyment of your very religion, on the present system, depends on a legislature in which you have no share, and over which you have no controul, and your priests are exposed to expulsion, banishment, and ruin, whenever their wealth and possessions furnish sufficient temptation. They cannot be sure that a virtuous prince will always fill the throne, and should a wicked or a careless king concur with a wicked ministry in extracting the treasure and strength of your country, it is impossible to conceive to what variety and to what extremes of wretchedness you may, under the present establish~

ment, be reduced.

We are informed you have already been called upon to waſte your lives in a conteſt with us. Should you, by complying in this inſtance, aſſent to your new eſtablishment, and a war break out with France, your wealth and your ſons may be ſent to perih in expeditions againſt their iſlands in the Weſt indies.

It cannot be preſumed that theſe conſiderations will have no weight with you, or that you are ſo loſt to all ſenſe of honor. We can never believe that the preſent race of Canadians are ſo degenerated as to poſſeſs neither the ſpirit, the gallantry, nor the courage of their anceſtors. You certainly will not permit the infamy and diſgrace of ſuch puſillanimity to reſt on your own heads, and the confequences of it on your children forever.

We, for our parts, are determined to live free, or not at all; and are reſolved, that poſterity ſhall never reproach us with having brought ſlaves into the world.

Permit us again to repeat that we are your friends, not your enemies, and be not impoſed upon by thoſe who may endeavour to create animoſities. The taking the fort and military ſtores at Ticonderoga and Crown-Point, and the armed veſſels on the lake, was dictated by the great law of ſelf-prefervation. They were intended to annoy us, and to cut off that friendly intercourſe and communication, which has hitherto ſubſiſted between you and us. We hope it has given you no uneaſineſs, and you may rely on our aſſurances, that theſe colonies will purſue no meaſures whatever, but ſuch as friendſhip and a regard for our mutual ſafety and intereſt may ſuggeſt.

As our concern for your welfare entitles us to your friendſhip, we preſume you will not, by doing us injury, reduce us to the diſagreeable neceſſity of treating you as enemies.

We yet entertain hopes of your uniting with us in the defence of our common liberty, and there is yet reaſon to believe, that ſhould we join in imploring the attention of our ſovereign, to the unmerited and unparalleled oppreſſions of his American ſubjects, he will at length be undeceived, and forbid a licentious Miniſtry any longer to riot in the ruins of the rights of Mankind.

The letter to the Canadians provided a vehicle for the Continental Congress to offer an explanation to the Canadians for the expedition that had been launched only sixteen days earlier to capture the British military stores at Fort Ticonderoga. Despite the fact that Ticonderoga was situated south of the St. Lawrence River, the natural boundary between the New England colonies and Quebec, – and therefore technically in the territory claimed by the Province of New York – the region existed as a sort of no-man's-land in the 1770s. The committee, no doubt, believed that the Canadians might have perceived the expedition as a intimidating maneuver against them personally, and wanted to emphasize that their quarrel was solely with the British.

On the 1st of June, 1775 the Congress passed a resolution *"That no expedition or incursion ought to be undertaken or made, by any colony, or body of colonists, against or into Canada; and that this Resolve be immediately transmitted to the commander of the forces at Ticonderoga."*

A letter from the Committee (of Safety) of Albany was received by the Continental Congress on Monday, 26 June. It was read to the delegates. Discussion of the letter was carried over into the 27th. The gist of the letter was echoed in a resolution passed that day: *"That as Governor Carlton is making preparations to invade theſe colonies and is inſtigating the Indian Nations to take up the Hatchet againſt them, Major Gen^l. Schuyler do exert his utmoſt power to deſtroy or take all veſſels, boats or floating batteries, preparing by ſ^d. Gov^r. or by his order, on or near the waters of the lakes."* Major General P. Schuyler was *"directed to repair as ſoon as conveniently he can to the poſts of Ticonderoga and Crown point, to examine into the fate thereof, and of the troops now ſtationed there, and how they are ſupplied with proviſions and neceſſary ſtores – into the fate alſo of the floop and other navigation on the lakes – alſo to obtain the beſt intelligence he can of the diſpoſition of the Canadians and Indians of Canada..."*

General Schuyler assembled an expeditionary force of roughly one thousand men at Fort Ticonderoga and, on 28 August, set out for the Canadian border. On 06 September the Patriots arrived at St. John's Fort which was situated about twelve miles southeast of Montreal and the St. Lawrence. He prepared to lay siege to the fortification commanded by British commander Sir

Charles Preston. Schuyler's scouts exaggerated the strength of the British garrison and the Patriot commander decided to withdraw to Isle aux Noix, about ten miles south of St. John's. On the 10th Schuyler initiated an attack on the fort at St. John's, but that ended in an embarrassing fiasco. He formed two columns to converge on the fort, but the two columns instead converged on each other in the dark, resulting in confusion and disorder. Both columns chose to retreat from the other. General Schuyler returned to Ticonderoga feigning illness. The command of the Patriot army fell to Schuyler's second-in-command, Brigadier General Richard Montgomery.

General Montgomery, a thirty-seven year old veteran of the French and Indian War (during which he accompanied General Amherst in his successful capture of Ticonderoga, Crown Point and Montreal in 1759) was enthusiastic and energetic. He exhibited a sharp contrast to General Shuyler's slow and deliberate manner. In fact, back in August, as Shuyler seemingly wasted time in preparing his expedition, Montgomery became impatient with the deadening pace of his superior, and on 28 August he had set out with a contingent of the Patriot forces toward Montreal. It was Montgomery's brash move which got General Shuyler moving. He quickly concluded his preparations and hastily set out to rendezvous with Montgomery at Ile aux Noix.

Montgomery began a formal siege of the fortification at St. John's on 16 September, 1775. For whatever reason, Colonel Preston, who was noticeably outnumbered by the Americans, did not take advantage of two schooners which he had anchored in the Richelieu River near the fort. As the British prepared for the siege, the Patriots took control of the two vessels.

General Montgomery sent Ethan Allen and Major John Brown northward from St. John's with the purpose of recruiting Canadians who might be sympathetic to the Patriot Cause. They found about three hundred Canadians who were willing to join the Patriots, but instead of returning to St. John's, the impetuous Allen led them in an impromptu attack on Montreal. On the night of 24 September Allen led a part of the troops across the St. Lawrence River downriver from the lightly-defended Montreal. There Allen waited Brown's troops, but they didn't appear. Rather, on the next day some two hundred and fifty Canadian militia troops sent by General Sir Guy Carleton appeared and routed the American Patriots after firing a single volley. Ethan Allen and thirty-five of his troops were taken prisoner.

As October rolled around, rainy weather and a lack of supplies began to induce a dispiriting attitude in the American troops. To remedy the situation, Montgomery sent a contingent of roughly fifty Americans and three hundred Canadians under Major John Brown and James Livingston to advance on another fortified structure, Chambly. Chambly was a venerable old stone fort which stood downriver from St. John's and midway between it and Montreal. The eighty-eight British troops under Major Joseph Stopford, who garrisoned Chambly, made no effort to use the cannon which they had, and after only a day and a half surrendered to the American Patriots. With the capture of Chambly, the Patriots now had additional ammunition and weapons to aid them in their siege of St. John's. Nineteen cannon and about six tons of gunpowder were among the spoils taken.

The siege of St. John's continued until the 2nd of November, 1775. On that date Colonel Preston surrendered. He had lost over seven hundred men over the course of the fifty-five day siege. The news of St. John's capitulation traveled northward and Sir Guy Carleton withdrew his forces from Montreal on 12 November. Carleton, with his remaining 130 men headed toward Quebec with the supplies and ammunition they could take on eleven boats. General Montgomery, unaware of the British withdrawal had prepared for an assault on the town. He soon found it wasn't necessary and Montreal became a prize for the Patriots on 13 November, 1775. It is interesting to note that on the 19th of November the small flotilla of British ships were captured by the Americans, but Carleton himself managed to escape capture, disguised as a farmer peasant. According to tradition he escaped in a whaleboat and later walked right past the rebels without their recognizing him.

Attention would now focus on the taking of Quebec, the last important British stronghold in Canada. But the taking of this fort or that fort, this city or another would not, ultimately, settle the question about Canada ~ whether she would embrace the Patriot Cause and her colonies join the other British colonies in their stand against Great Britain. On 14 February, 1776 a letter was read before the Continental Congress from the Committee of Correspondence who had conferred with a Canadian gentleman, Prudent La Jeunesse, who had recently arrived in Philadelphia. The Committee reported that "*when the Canadians first heard of the Difpute they were generally on the American fide; but by the Influence of the Clergy and the Noblefe, who have been continually preaching and perfuading them againft us, they are now brought into a State of Suspence or Uncertainty which Side to follow.*"

This chronological history of the Revolutionary War will be continued in a future newsletter.
