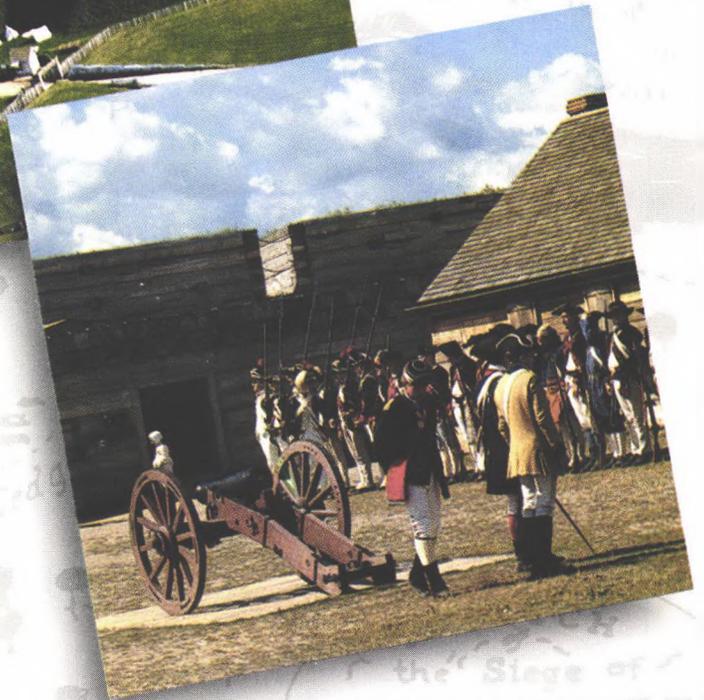


# FORT STANWIX

CONSTRUCTION AND MILITARY HISTORY



the Siege of  
FORT SCHUYLER  
General B. G. Schuyler  
1759

BY JOHN F. LUZADER

# FORT STANWIX: Construction and Military History

By

**John F. Luzader**



Eastern National provides quality educational products and services to America's national parks and other public trusts.

ISBN 1-888213-53-1

Reprint published 2001 through a grant from

**Eastern National**  
Fort Washington, PA  
[www.eParks.com](http://www.eParks.com)

Edited by  
William Lange, Park Ranger  
Fort Stanwix National Monument  
Rome, NY

Printed by  
Presto Print  
New Hartford, NY

# Acknowledgements:

In 1969 National Park Service Historian John F. Luzader researched and wrote the report *Fort Stanwix: Construction and Military History*. This report provided valuable information and illustrations for the reconstruction of the fort and its programs. Mr. Luzader's report was then compiled with two other reports and printed in the 1976 Government Printing Office publication Fort Stanwix: History, Historic Furnishings, and Historic Structures Reports.

In 1999 Eastern National, the cooperating association and bookstore operator at Fort Stanwix National Monument, awarded the park a grant to publish Mr. Luzader's report again. Mr. Luzader, who is now retired, worked with me to revise and update his original manuscript so that it could be republished. On the following pages you will find Mr. Luzader's report, reflecting current scholarly work for your enjoyment and education.

There are many people that need to be thanked for their work, and oftentimes tireless efforts, to make this publication a reality. Special thanks are given to Eastern National and its staff for providing the grant to republish this report and technical assistance. Special thanks is also given to Tony Mario of Margo Studios for providing the copyright permission to use his photographs on the cover, and the British Library for granting copyright permission to use maps of the Crown Collection throughout the booklet. Robb D'Apice and his staff at Presto Print worked with me many hours and provided the valuable assistance and direction that only a publisher can provide. To the staff of the National Park Service at Fort Stanwix National Monument and at other units I say thank you for your support and understanding when I needed to spend what seemed to be countless hours to complete this work. Of note are Mildred Burr who read word for word comparing the original report to the newly typed version, and Larry Lowenthal and Bill Sawyer for their reviews of the publication's historical content. Butch Street and Adeline Tefft provided technical computer assistance when converting the scanned images of the original report to a word processing document just didn't seem to want to work right. Lastly, to both Gary Warshefski and Mike Kusch who proofread many drafts and provided even more suggestions.

Finally, I would be amiss if I did not offer a very special note of appreciation to Mr. Luzader himself. None of this would have been possible without his untiring work. Even though he is enjoying his retirement today, Mr. Luzader eagerly agreed to work on his report. He made changes he wanted to make years ago, considered and included comments made by others, and personally wrote some of the revised sections that were added to this study. All of the words in this report are Mr. Luzader's, whether he personally wrote them or approved them for inclusion into the text.

William Lange  
Park Ranger  
March 2001

# Contents:

## **Fort Stanwix: Construction and Military History**

List of Maps and Drawings	page iv
Introduction	page v
I Oneida Carrying Place and its Early Forts	page 1
II The Building of Fort Stanwix	page 7
III Fort Stanwix in the Revolution-Rebuilding	page 26
IV Fort Stanwix in the Revolution-Siege	page 39
Appendix: The "Stars and Stripes" at Fort Stanwix: A Summary of the Evidence	page 73
Bibliography	page 86

## List of Maps and Drawings:

I	Illustration: Plan of Fort Stanwise [Stanwix]	page 23
II	"Plan of Forts at the Onoida [sic] or Great Carrying Place"	page 79
III	"Return of His Majesty's Troops Detached from the Oneida Station -15th August 1758 under the Command of Lieut. Colonel Bradstreet"	page 79
IV	"Plan of Fort Stanwix Built at the Oneida Station ~1758"	page 80
V	"Plan of Fort Stanwix Showing what Works were done at that Post from July to December 1759"	page 81
VI	"A Sketch of Fort Stanwix, with its Buildings and Outworks, November 19, 1764"	page 82
VII	"Plan of Fort Stanwix Built at the Oneida Station 1758"	page 82
VIII	"Plan of Fort Stanwix, Showing what is finished and what is to be done to compleat it"	page 83
IX	Francois de Fleury. "A Sketch of the siege of Fort Schuyler"	page 83
X	"Gansevoort Map of Fort Stanwix"	page 84
XI	"Plan Showing the Putative Layout of Fort Stanwix in August 1777"	page 85

# Introduction:

(This is John Luzader's introduction from the original report. Although people have since moved on from their mentioned positions their dedication to the project is still appreciated.)

The purpose of this study is to provide an account of the history of Fort Stanwix (Fort Schuyler) that stood on a site within the limits of the modern city of Rome, New York. The emphasis is upon the story of the fort's construction and its role in the defeat of Gen. John Burgoyne's campaign of 1777, an American victory that resulted in the internationalization of the War of Independence. Other incidents, including the two Treaties of Fort Stanwix and the border warfare of 1778-81, are mentioned very briefly, not because they are insignificant but because they are not central to the purpose noted above.

Special thanks are due to a number of persons whose assistance was valuable in the preparation of this work. Among them are: Melvin Weig, former superintendent, Morristown National Historical Park, now retired; his successor, James Coleman; Roy E. Appleman, former chief, Park History Studies, National Park Service, retired; Historian William Meuse, formerly of Saratoga National Historical Park, now with the Harpers Ferry Center, National Park Service; Dr. Eugene Kramer, senior historian, New York State History Office; the staff of the Rome Historical Society; and the staffs of the Map Division, Library of Congress, Huntington Library, New York Public Library, Boston Public Library, New York State Library, British Public Record Office, Public Archives of Canada, New Jersey Historical Society, and New York Historical Society. A particular debt is owed to my colleagues: Archeologist Lee Hanson, Architect Orville Carroll, and Historian Louis Torres.

# Oneida Carrying Place and its Early Forts

The city of Rome, New York, lies athwart an ancient route along which travelers, traders, and warriors moved for centuries. On the southeast side of the city are the headwaters of the Mohawk River, which flows eastward until it joins the Hudson to reach the Atlantic Ocean. On the northern side is Wood Creek, which with the Fish Kill (Creek), Lake Oneida, and Oswego River forms a passage to the Great Lakes. Using this route, the Indian and Colonial trader had only to carry his canoe over the nearly level land between the two riparian systems to travel by water from the ocean to the Great Lakes and Canada. The short portage between the Mohawk and Wood Creek came to be known as the Oneida Carrying Place. Possession of this portage was a significant strategic position on the northwest frontier, which carried with it control of the water route. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of that frontier. That the Mohawk was the gateway to a vast western region was apparent to the colonists and the government in London. More immediately important were its associations with the local Indians. The area from the upper Hudson to Lake Erie was the land of the confederacy known as the Six Nations of the Iroquois, which was composed of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora nations. In spite of their limited numbers, the Iroquois were the strongest native power in eighteenth century North America; and they were the generally consistent foes of the French and their Indian allies, supporting first the Dutch and then the English in their Colonial Wars. But for them, the English colonists would have been flanked north and west by France and her native confederates, the Algonquians and Hurons. They were economically important as the entrepreneurs of a fur trade that made the northwest frontier one of the most important economic areas in North America.

Provincial interest in the region and its people appeared early in the Colonial period. Dutch traders in Fort Orange (Albany) carried on an extensive beaver trade with the natives and were constantly concerned that France would seduce the Iroquois and possess their lands. This concern continued after the colony became English, and as early as 1727 the province built a small-fortified trading post at the mouth of the Oswego River on Lake Ontario. This was eventually replaced by a larger and stronger post; and, before the middle of the century, stockades stood at the falls of the Oswego and at both ends of Oneida Lake. The size of the garrisons varied, depending upon the intensity of the international rivalry for the Indian trade.

The Oneida Carrying Place was one of the most critical points on the route to the Great Lakes and Canada. On July 10, 1702, two Indian tribes, the Twightwighs (a Miami group) and the Teoreondaties (perhaps a Seneca group) petitioned Governor Cornbury of New York, asking that a path be marked over the portage and that trees be removed from Wood Creek to permit the passage of canoes. The governor granted their request and promised to send guides to meet the Indians and conduct them to Albany.<sup>1</sup>

More than two decades later, on November 10, 1724, Cadwallader Colden, then Surveyor General and later Lieutenant Governor and author of a classic history of the Five Nations, prepared a memorial concerning the fur trade for Governor William Burnet in which he referred to the Carrying Place, describing the portage as being three-miles long except in dry weather, when its length was five miles.<sup>2</sup> Occasionally the provincial government's officials, especially the Commissioners for Indian Affairs, gave their attention to matters related to the portage, as when they considered the complaints of forty-seven traders who were having trouble with the Oneidas because the Indians were making too much of a good thing of their situation at the Carrying Place.<sup>3</sup>

## Oneida Carrying Place and its Early Forts

The Oneida Carrying Place's position on the route between Albany and the Great Lakes was described in the following terms:

Oswego, along the accustomed route, is computed to be about 300 miles west from Albany. The first sixteen, to the village of Schenectady, is land carriage, on a good wagon road. From thence to Little Falls of the Mohawk River, at sixty-five miles distance, the battoes are set against a rapid stream; which too, in dry seasons, is so shallow, that the men are frequently obliged to turn out, and draw their craft over the rifts with inconceivable labor. At the Little Falls, the portage exceeds not a mile: the ground being marshy will admit of no wheel-carriage, and therefore the Germans who reside here, transport the battoes in sleds, which they keep for that purpose. The same conveyance is used at the Great Carrying Place, sixty miles beyond the Little Falls; all the way to which the current is still adverse, and extremely swift. The portage here is longer or shorter, according to the dryness or wetness of the seasons. In the last summer months, when the rains are most infrequent, it is usually six or eight miles across. Taking water again, we enter a narrow rivulet, called the Wood creek, which leads into the Oneida Lake, distant about forty miles. This stream, tho' favorable, being shallow, and its banks covered with thick woods, was at this time much obstructed with old logs and fallen trees. The Oneida Lake stretches from east to west about thirty miles, and in calm weather is passed with great facility. At its western extremity opens the Onondaga [Oswego] River, leading down to Oswego, situated at its entrance on the south side of Lake Ontario. Extremely difficult and hazardous with rifts and rocks; and the current flowing with surprising rapidity. The principal obstruction is twelve miles short of Oswego, and is a fall of about eleven feet perpendicular. The portage here is by land, not exceeding forty yards, before they launch for the last time.<sup>4</sup>

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Oneida Carrying Place was an active station on the western route with four landing places, an upper one on each end for use during the spring and early summer when the waters were high and the lower ones for the drier seasons. Indians and possibly a few white settlers took advantage of the location, supplying wheeled vehicles to carry freight over the portage.

The Carrying Place's military potential became obvious in 1755, when William Shirley, Governor of the Massachusetts Bay and Major General of the Royal Forces in North America, prepared for his Niagara campaign. Capt. William Williams of the 51st Regiment of Foot was sent to Oneida to open the road between the river and Wood Creek. Supplies and men moved up the old route, bound for Oswego, where ships were being readied for the lake voyage to Fort Niagara. The general moved his headquarters into a newly erected building and directed the operations from there throughout the rest of June and July. It was here that he received official news of Gen. Edward Braddock's defeat on the Monongahela on July 9. That event was a great personal tragedy to him, for his son and namesake was among the slain. To his sorrow and immediate burdens was added the vastly increased responsibility for the success of British arms in the Colonies. Braddock's death made him the commanding general in North America.<sup>5</sup> Here in his log headquarters, Shirley struggled with the problems of his new role. It was a difficult one for a 61-year-old man who had spent his adult life in the courts of law and in colonial administration. Everywhere he turned problems faced him, not the least of which was the effective use of the services of another important civilian turned soldier, William Johnson. Here, also, he enlarged the purpose of his expedition from the limited objective against Niagara

(Frontenac) to the conquest of the Great Lakes region. To that end, Oswego should be fortified because "It is as much the key of these lakes and the southern and western country lying round them, to the English, as Nova Scotia is of the sea coast and eastern parts of North America; and the loss of them to the French... must not only make them absolute masters of the navigation of all these lakes, . . . but let them into the heart of the country inhabited by the Six Nations." By reducing the French posts, Britain would secure "the whole southern country behind the Appalachian or Allegheny Mountains to the Crown of Great Britain, and have a further effect, to render Canada itself, of little or no value to the French."<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the summer, General Shirley worked at strengthening Oswego and preparing to take the offensive against Niagara. However, the campaign was delayed when a council of war recommended that it be deferred until spring, "when greater numbers of men, vessels, provisions, and muskets would be available".<sup>7</sup> Deciding to winter his units at Oswego and Wood Creek, the general continued to plan for the next year and to seek support for his theories of how the British should move against the French in the lake country.

Shirley was concerned about the security of the Albany-Oswego supply route. He had a healthy respect for French and Indian tactical mobility and was alert to the route's vulnerability to raids. On October 29, while stopping at the Carrying Place en route from Oswego to Albany, he prepared a set of instructions for Captain Williams that dealt with the security of that part of the supply line. After ordering him to assemble all of his command at the portage and remain there until ordered elsewhere, to safeguard military stores, and to provide for transport over the Carrying Place, Shirley instructed Williams:

You are to employ as many of the Men of the Detachment under your Command as you possibly can, in finishing the Fort this day marked out at this place and called Fort Williams and Completing Barracks therein to contain 150 Men. You are to build therein a Storehouse of about the same Dimensions of that already built here, and as soon as the Barracks are fit to receive the Men of your Detachment you are to Quarter them therein.

He instructed the captain to repair the road over the portage, to build a bridge over the "morass," and to provide quarters for one officer and thirty men who were being detached from Oswego to his command. He then informed him that "I have ordered Captain Marcus Petri with the men under his command to build a Fort at the upper landing on the Wood Creek, to be called Wood Creek Fort." When Petri had completed the fort, he was to clear Wood Creek of obstructions; and Williams would station thirty men and an officer at the fort and build a storehouse there.<sup>8</sup>

The captains carried out their assignments. Fort Williams was erected near the Mohawk landings. It was a stockade with four half-bastions, each mounting a cannon. Inside were barracks for 150 men and two storehouses or blockhouses that John Oisher was directed to build in October. The Wood Creek Fort, subsequently called Fort Bull, was a smaller, weaker post, built of a double row of palisades, the outer one fifteen to eighteen feet high and the interior one about the height of a man. It mounted no cannon and could accommodate approximately thirty men.<sup>9</sup>

Shirley's fears for the safety of the supply route were well founded. Early in the morning of March 27, 1756, a French party commanded by an officer named DeLery attacked Fort Bull. Everyone within the fort, except a woman and a few soldiers, was killed. The post's magazine caught fire and the powder exploded, wrecking the fort. A sortie from Fort Williams and the

## Oneida Carrying Place and its Early Forts

belief that William Johnson was within striking distance with a superior force deterred the French from attacking the larger fort.<sup>10</sup>

Alarmed by this threat to the security of the Carrying Place, the British began strengthening their position. Two engineers, Mackellar and Sowers, started building a new fort — a stockade with a ditch on three sides — on the site of the one recently destroyed. On the side toward Wood Creek, a dam that impounded the water to facilitate floating bateaux down Wood Creek raised the water. The post was approximately 150 feet square, but the nature of the ground prevented building a perfect square.<sup>11</sup> Major Charles Craven completed the work; and by August a stronger fort, named Fort Wood Creek, with three structures, probably a barracks, and storehouses, had been completed.

At the upper landing of Wood Creek, Major Craven erected a new post, named Fort Newport. Its purpose was to receive supplies brought over the portage from the Mohawk and to cover a dam that raised the water of the creek so that upon opening the flood gate bateaux could float down to Fort Wood Creek, three miles away, "which saved much Land Carriage, and in dry Seasons seven miles to Wood Creek."

Fort Williams had been built hurriedly and was not strong enough to provide an adequate degree of security. Therefore, Craven was instructed to replace it with a new fort, called the Pentagon or New Fort and designated Fort Craven by later writers. It was built of "hewed logs horizontally laid, and tied with cross beams, nine feet wide & filled with the earth dug out of the ditch. The bastions intended for bombproof magazines..., the rampart near the gates was raised higher than the gates, the height being near 10 feet & almost as high, all round." When the Pentagon was completed, Fort Williams would be razed. As shall be seen, it was never completed.<sup>12</sup>

By the end of the summer of 1756, the Oneida Carrying Place was an active unit in the Colonial military supply system. Three forts stood guard; Wood Creek, Newport, and Williams, and the Pentagon was nearing completion. Two dams on Wood Creek cut the portage time so that the seven miles from the upper landing to Canada Creek could be negotiated in an hour and a quarter. There was a brick kiln, a saw-pit, and forge; and sutlers' houses lined the road leading from the Mohawk. A large post garden lay at the junction of the river and Little Creek. Craven's camp was located in an open area near Fort Williams and the Pentagon, which was still under construction. The situation at the Carrying Place had never been so strong.<sup>13</sup>

The year 1756 was a critical one for British interests. William Shirley's plan for a comprehensive campaign on all frontiers was wrecked on the shoals of shortages and Colonial governments' unwillingness to contribute to a common effort. Less ambitious efforts against Crown Point and Ticonderoga and the forts on Lake Ontario were all that were salvaged. Toward these undertakings Shirley turned his energies. In spite of personal sorrow and political frustrations, he gave of himself unstintingly. He vested the command of the Crown Point expedition in John Winslow and retained the direction of the Great Lake campaign for himself.

The destruction of Fort Bull was an illustration of one of Shirley's most serious military problems: hostile action along the western supply route and the difficulties attending to maintaining the British garrison at Oswego. William Johnson investigated the matter, but little could be done except reprimand Captain Williams for building a defective fort and not providing for adequate defenses of the Carrying Place.<sup>14</sup> Williams had also ignored repeated orders to forward supplies to Oswego, had left his post against orders; and the situation at that place had become so bad that its commander, Col. James Mercer, had been forced to drag supplies through the snow

from various forts along the route. Finally, the new Governor, Sir Charles Hardy, had organized a relief party.<sup>15</sup>

Through April and May, supplies, workers, and arms rushed to Oswego in preparation for the campaign. Shirley worked hard at recruiting men for his expedition, which if brought to full strength, would have an effective strength of approximately 4,500 men.

While the general was struggling with these preparations, a political campaign directed against him bore fruit. He lost the patronage of the Duke of Newcastle, letters poured into London criticizing every phase of his civil and military administrations, local critics won over Governor Hardy, and the Ministry removed him. After a period of uncertainty about the command in North America, Col. Daniel Webb became Shirley's interim successor. He would be followed by James Abercromby, who would eventually be superseded by John Campbell, the Earl of Loudoun, who was to become the commander-in-chief in North America.<sup>16</sup> While he awaited the arrival of his successors, Shirley went ahead with his plans for Crown Point and Ontario.

Webb and Abercromby arrived in America in June and Lord Loudoun in July; and the three new commanders met in Albany, where Loudoun abandoned the Lake Ontario offensive in order to concentrate upon Ticonderoga. This did not imply abandonment of Oswego; and on August 12, Webb, with the 24th Regiment of Foot and some of Bradstreet's batteaux men, was ordered to reinforce the Ontario garrison, about which the new commander-in-chief was becoming apprehensive.

Loudoun's concern was justified. Soon after Webb, now a temporary major general, arrived at the Oneida Carrying Place on August 20, word reached him that the French had captured Oswego and that they were advancing toward the Mohawk, 6,000 strong. As soon as he heard the news, Major Craven mounted two six-pounders on one of the Pentagon's completed bastions and prepared to mount two more. Webb was in no frame of mind to defend the portage. Although he had Craven's troops, the garrisons of Forts Williams, Newport, and Wood Creek, the last including 150 of Peter Schuyler's New Jersey Regiment, plus his own 24th Regiment and an unknown number of Bradstreet's men, on August 31 he gave the order to destroy the works and retreat to German Flats.<sup>17</sup> It was an inauspicious beginning for his American career, whose record included the disastrous failure to support Fort William Henry almost a year to the day later, which earned him the unenviable reputation of Britain's most incompetent general officer in America during the Seven Years' War.

## Endnotes:

---

<sup>1</sup> Edmund B. O'Callaghan, *Documents Relating to The Colonial History of the State of New York* (10 vols., Albany, 1854), IV, 979, 981.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 726 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, VI, 858 (London Document xxxi)

<sup>4</sup> William Livingston, *A Review of the Military Operations in North America* (London, 1757), 42-43.

<sup>5</sup> John A. Schutz, *William Shirley, King's Governor of Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill, 1961), 209.

<sup>6</sup> Colonial Office 5/135.

<sup>7</sup> Schutz, *William Shirley*, 214-15. July 20, 1758; Abercromby to Stanwix, July 23, 1758.

<sup>8</sup> C. O. 5/46, 425-28.

<sup>9</sup> "Plan of the Forts at the Onoinda [sic.] or Great Carrying Place," British Museum, Crown Collection, no. xxx. Copy in Map Division, Library of Congress. APPENDIX I.

<sup>10</sup> O'Callaghan, *Documents*, X, 403-05 (Paris Document XII).

## Oneida Carrying Place and its Early Forts

---

<sup>11</sup> C. O. 5/47, 97-98; "Plan of the Forts at the Oneida or Great Carrying Place."

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> James Sullivan and A. C. Flick, eds., *William Johnson Papers*, New York State Library (10 vols., Albany, 1921-1951 ), IX, 434.

<sup>15</sup> C. O. 5/46, 236.

<sup>16</sup> Schutz, *William Shirley*, 233; Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe* (2 vols., Boston, 1931), I, 396.

<sup>17</sup> "Plan of the Forts at the Oneida Carrying Place;" Appendix 1, Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe*, I, 419-20.

# The Building of Fort Stanwix

The French capture of the forts at Oswego and Webb's destruction of the posts at the Oneida Carrying Place were severe blows to British prestige on the northwestern frontier. The vital region of the Iroquois was exposed to the machinations and maneuvers of the French and their Indian allies. The tribes of the Six Nations were not favorably impressed by the defense of Oswego and were contemptuous of the abandonment of the Carrying Place. Taking council of their self-interest, many of the province's red friends began to question the wisdom of identifying themselves with so inept and cowardly a lot as their white neighbors seemed proving themselves to be. Might not a more accommodating attitude toward the French — or least a neutral pose — be the better part of wisdom? It required all of William Johnson's and George Croghan's skill to preserve a working relationship with the tribes that would prepare the way for an eventual recouping of English fortunes.

The events not only damaged relations with the Iroquois; they emboldened other tribes already allied with or favorably disposed toward France to harass Anglo-American settlers and traders and to increase their enthusiasm for cooperating with French military efforts.

Nor were the results confined to military matters. The economic effects were crippling for those involved in the fur trade, of which the Iroquois were the middlemen and for which the Albany-Ontario route was the lifeline.

The settlers of the Mohawk Valley were left in an extremely dangerous situation. They were vulnerable to Indian raids, and there was a frightening possibility that the French would invade the province and bring organized war and devastation. This possibility became a reality in November 1757, when Picoté de Belestre and the Sieur de Lorimer, with 300 regulars and an equal number of Canadians and Indians, moved eastward to German Flats and Fort Herkimer. The inhabitants were predominantly Germans living on the western fringe of settlement, where they formed a buffer for the older communities. The provincial government had not always used them well, and they had grievances against the English that the French intended to exploit, at the same time persuading the neighboring Oneidas to join the anti-English coalition. The settlers had confirmed French hopes by secretly agreeing to remain neutral. The fort was garrisoned by 200 men of the 22d Regiment under Capt. Richard Townshend, who warned the Palatines of the approaching French and urged them to take refuge in the fort. Trusting the French to respect their neutrality, they declined his offer. The French avoided the fort and at three o'clock in the morning of November 12 attacked the settlement, stealing and slaughtering the livestock and burning the houses and barns. Fifty of the Germans were killed and scalped and 150 were taken captive. The rest were left homeless to face the winter without shelter or food. The garrison was too weak to save the settlement, and its members probably counted themselves lucky to have escaped an attack or siege. When Lord Howe arrived from Schenectady, he found a scene of slaughter and destruction. The French commander on the Niagara frontier, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, reported the affair with obvious satisfaction, writing: "I have ruined the plans of the English; I have disposed the Five Nations to attack them; I have carried consternation and terror into all those parts."<sup>1</sup>

As 1757 came to an end, Frenchmen had reason to be pleased with the progress of the war. Their control of the Ohio Valley was so firm that, for the present, it was not being challenged. They had razed Fort William Henry. The Albany-Ontario line and Mohawk country lay exposed. Governor Vaudreuil made bold plans for carrying the war into the heart of New York. Montcalm would move down Lake George and take Fort Edward. The Chevalier de Levis would take 3,000 soldiers and Indians into the Mohawk Valley. The Iroquois, persuaded by French

## The Building of Fort Stanwix

strength, would join him in sweeping down the valley; and Albany would be doomed.<sup>2</sup> The governor's plan, similar in design to Burgoyne's for 1777, never took effect. General James Abercromby, who had succeeded Lord Loudoun as commander-in-chief, was at the head of Lake George preparing to attack Ticonderoga. The French plan for the Mohawk was abandoned, and Levis and his men were ordered to march from Montreal to reinforce Montcalm.

The defeats of 1757 had far-reaching effects on the British leadership. William Pitt was making plans for redeeming the situation in the Colonies, and these included an invasion of Canada via Ticonderoga and Crown Point, an amphibious attack on Louisbourg, and an attack on Fort Duquesne. The Ticonderoga operation failed with the repulse of Abercromby on July 7, 1758, but the other parts of the plan succeeded; and before the year ended, Louisbourg and Duquesne were English. The tide of war turned and was running in Britain's favor.<sup>3</sup>

The renewal of British vigor was evident in the Iroquois country. Sometime in the late spring or early summer of 1758, Abercomby, amid his concerns for the expedition against Ticonderoga, decided to repossess the Oneida Carrying Place, and he directed Brigadier John Stanwix to occupy the portage with four New York Independent Companies, 1,400 provincials, and a company of rangers. He instructed Stanwix "to take Post at the Oneida Carrying Place, which I apprehend will not only cover that Country, but enable them to send out large Scouts, to annoy the Enemy, and remove all the Fears and Objections of the Five Nations have raised against their joining us, upon whom to this Hour, I cannot depend for a single Man."<sup>4</sup>

In the meantime, Sir William Johnson had been negotiating with the Oneida Indians to obtain their consent to the construction of a new fort at the Carrying Place. To gain their approval, the British made two promises: that the fort, like the others on the Mohawk, would be demolished at the end of the war; and that there would be a "plentiful and cheap trade."<sup>5</sup>

With the Oneida's acquiescence assured, the British began to plan their new fort. Lt. Col. James Montrossor prepared a proposal, probably accompanied by a plan, that provided for:

A Good Post to be made at the Oneida Carrying Place capable of Lodging 200 Men, in the Winter, and for 3 or 400 Men in the Summer, for its Defense; with Logs—A Parapet of such a thickness, as the Engineer shall think necessary, according to the Situation—

A Ditch to be made, to serve to thicken the Parapet—Barracks to be made underneath the Rampart, with the Flues of the Chimneys, to come thr'o the Top.

The Square will be the Cheapest Form, to be made use of for this Work—

The Bastions in like manner, can be made use of, for Storehouses or Magazines.

In the Square may be made, Lodgings for the Officers, and the rest of the Quadrangle clear The whole for be Logged.

And opposite to the Officers' Barrack may be made a Storehouse for the Deposit of Indian Goods.<sup>6</sup>

Brigadier General Stanwix ordered his engineer, Capt. William Green, to review the plan and submit

his opinion of its usefulness. The captain commented at length:

By a good Post I understand to be meant, such a one, as will contain with ease, the said Number of Men; To be executed in such a manner, as to protect them from a *Coup de Main*, and to be of such a Size, as will admitt [sic] of a proper Defence by such a Garrison, The Exterior side of which Square, cannot possibly be less (if so little) than 300 ft which procures but a very small Defense, from its flanks, & will make an Exterior Circuit of Logging, of nearly 1420 ft by, at the very least 14 ft high, according to the Situation may be, & in order to admit of Barracks under the Rampart, to which the Retaining & Bracing Logwork, as well as the Logwork fronting the Interior Area, must in course be considered, as likewise the Logwork to cover the Barracks, storehouses, and Magazines, that are proposed to be made under the Rampart of the Curtains, and Bastions, by which it will appear, that the greatest part of the Rampart round this Post, must be formed & Supported with Logwork. As I am ignorant of the Situation I conceive that any Form of a work that does not take up more in it's Exterior & Interior Circuit attention being made to an equal Flank Defense must be as cheap and as good as a Square, as it might not be in my Power strictly to adhere to that Figure As to the thickness of the Parapet, being informed cannon can be brought there, by the Enemy, it cannot be less than 12 ft., if so little, 18 ft being the Standard in such Cases. The Rampart for the Maneuver of Cannon, and likewise to admit of a Reasonable Breadth for the Barracks underneath cannot be less than 20ft.

The Breadth and Depth of the Ditch cannot be considered in Proportion for the Earth wanted, to form the said Parapet, and to cover the Logwork of the Proposed Barracks, magazines & Storehouses to be made under the Rampart.

His Excellency General Abercrombie is pleased to observe in His Letter of the 16th of July to the following Purport—That He does not find Himself, vested with the Power of Building Forts, and that His Excellency, does not think, that it would be right for Him, to undertake the Building of those He Proposed &c.

I humbly conceive, that the plan ordered for the Post at the Oneida Carrying Place, is in all Respects & Circumstances to be Considered as a Fort, as it partakes, not only the figure, and the respective parts of a Fort, but even of the Permanent Intentions of a Fortress, as must clearly appear, by considering all the Particulars Ordered in that Plan, the Materials, of which it is ordered to be built with, being only peculiar to the Country and Situation, and can no ways effect the Intention of that Work, and as to its capacity, in Point of Size, and the proper Strength, requisite in the Execution, when considered, it is ordered To be made a good Post, for 200 Men to 400 Men, I should think it my Duty, to execute it with Propriety, Care, and Attention, in order that it might answer the end Proposed That of Covering that part of the Country.

How far this can be executed, (allowing it, only to be looked upon, as a Post, instead of it's absolutely partaking, of all the Qualities and Intentions of a Fort) to answer the use Proposed, of having it finished against the Winter, must appear, by Considering:

## The Building of Fort Stanwix

- First It will be near the end of this Month, before it will be begun upon,
- 2dly How soon the Winter sets in in that part of the Country
- 3dly The great quantity of Carpenters Work, to be executed in Logging & Bracing at least 1420 Exterior Circuit by 14 ft high, Besides the Retaining Loggwork, and the Front Loggwork towards the Interior Area, together with covering the Barracks, Storehouses, and Magazines with Logs, under the Rampart, all this being composed of Heavy workmanship, besides the lodgings for the Officers, and Storehouses for Indian Goods.
- 4thly The Consequences, that may attend, this post being attacked, if only half, or two thirds completed.

And lastly, the Practicability of executing the post, before the Winter sets in, must still further be judged, not only, by the Number of Artificers, that would be Requisite, to complete it, in due time, but by considering, It is one of the Reasons, (inter Alia,) His Excellency, General Abercrombie Himself, gives, for laying aside the Scheme of Building a Fort there — By Observing as follows... "Besides, when I Recollect, how far the Season is advanced, and that it is not likely, that by beginning a Fort \* now, it would be finished, against the Winter, & consequently not of the use proposed.

\*I beg it may be remembered that I have concluded the Post Order'd, to be a Fort."

NB The Exterior Circuit of Fort Edward is nearly 1564 Ft and as I am informed, took nearly Two Seasons to build it And the Exterior Circuit of the Fort Proposed, will be nearly 1,420 Ft.<sup>7</sup>

Colonel Montessor answered Captain Green's comments in this brief reply:

The orders for building a Post or Fort at Oneida Carrying place were so plain that they did not seem to warrant any Explanation, except in the Situation, which not being exactly the figure of Course is subjected to it and tho' called a square, has often its four sides unequal, and as part may be unattainable by a swamp, morass &ca. that side has a Parapet and Rampart less strong than the others and without a Ditch, all those alterations and changes are left to the Engineer.

As to its Execution, Amongst the number of Troops on the Mohawk River, there are no doubt carpenters more than sufficient who understand that business.

2d. The winter sets in there as [other] parts of the Province of New York, and not sooner; and as to the Practicability of Executing this post or Fort before the winter Major Eyers began Fort Wm Henry in Sept. and it was finished by the end of Nov. following being an irregular square of about 300 ft each side with Provincials along and without any Expense.<sup>8</sup>

General Abercromby had obviously intended that the new station at the Carrying Place be a rather modest affair, less extensive and permanent than what would be ordinarily considered a

fort. Both Montessor and Green projected a more ambitious undertaking: a fortification that included curtains, bastions, ramparts, barracks, magazine, and storehouses. In spite of his doubt about his authority to have such a "fort" constructed, the general soon accepted the implications inherent in the proposals and referred to the project as a fort. Abercromby also realized, along with Stanwix, that the engineers were in essential agreement in their proposals, with Green's remarks representing "rather a Protraction on his Part to put that Plan into Execution, than any valid reasoning to invalidate its taking place." He proceeded to authorize Stanwix to order Green to begin construction "without any further Delay."<sup>9</sup>

Several problems attended getting work on the new fortification under way. In the first place, Captain Green's health was not equal to the task of directing the construction. General Stanwix asked that Montessor be detailed to work with the captain, a request that fortunately was not granted, since in his next letter Stanwix wrote: "Colonel Montessor's letter to Captain Green has given him the greatest shock the poor man was very ill before this proposal has almost killed him."<sup>10</sup> Abercromby replaced Green with Lt. John Williams, noting "that he is acquainted with that Part of the Country, & Accustomed to the method of working in it, besides from Capt. Green's bad state of health, and the difficulties he stated to former Plan, which was not near so extensive, it is morally certain he would not execute it within the proper time."<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, the refortification of the Great Carrying Place was only one part of the operations planned for redeeming British interests in the Iroquois country. Lt. Col. John Bradstreet's plan for attacking Fort Frontenac had been revived, and much of General Stanwix's attention was directed toward assisting in collecting men and having them ready to move up the Mohawk to the Carrying Place, where they were assembled preparatory to marching westward toward Lake Ontario. A total of 5,600 men were intended for the Mohawk-Ontario area, of whom 3,600 would accompany Bradstreet and 2,000 would be employed in building the new fort.<sup>12</sup> Desertions and sick lists lowered the effective numbers to the point where Bradstreet ended up with less than 3,000 men and Stanwix had to carry on the construction with a much smaller force than he believed necessary.<sup>13</sup>

Lieutenant Williams, the newly assigned engineer, joined Stanwix on August 14; and, in spite of the general's pessimism about prospects of carrying out the work within the time available and with the provisions on hand and at Schenectady, within a few days he began work on the site marked out within entrenchments that had been laid out by Major Eyres, Abercromby's assistant engineer.<sup>14</sup> Horatio Gates, a survivor of Braddock's defeat and future victor at Saratoga, became the brigade major, responsible for the administrative details of the force at the Carrying Place.

Work got under way at a pace that must have been gratifying to General Stanwix. The first log for the new fort was laid on August 26, and, ten days later the commander wrote:

We have finished the foundation of the fort inside & outside & tyed the work the work with retaining Logs & half way round the second tier of logs, are pretty forward with a Magazine in one of the Bastions & laid the foundations of two of the Curtains for Casemates for the Barracks, have got 40000 Bricks ready to Burn for the Chimneys & propose another Kiln of 100000, if the Weather will allow, in a weeks time shall have a Saw Mill Completed which. will furnish us plentifully with Boards & plank, and have got ready a great quantity of shingles for Covering such huts & other Buildings as we shall be able to erect & are not without hopes if we get back our men from Col. Bradstreet's Enterprise in any time to make tolerable Cover for 400 men for the winter & this Fort will I view that number at least to defend it as our Bastions are very large & when a Ditch & Glacis is Completed will take up all the height of this fine spot & as Oswego is by you

## The Building of Fort Stanwix

in one of Your letters proposed to be the principle Fortification this will I think answer every purpose if we can in time make it Tenable, in which all pains & industry shall be made upon it.<sup>15</sup>

While Lieutenant Williams was making such praise-worthy progress, important news reached the Carrying Place. Colonel Bradstreet had captured the French fort at Cataraqui (present Kingston, Ontario) on August 27 and had burned it and the ships moored there.<sup>16</sup>

At about the time news from the west reached Stanwix, Lieutenant Williams received a letter from Colonels Montessor and Eyres directing him to stop following the plan that he had been using and follow one that had been considered earlier. General Stanwix had favored the one that Montessor and Eyres were now endorsing, but the lieutenant argued that changing plans at that point would preclude making the fort tenable in time for its use during the winter. The general recorded how the matter was resolved on the spot in the following manner:

...that we might not let half our time be misspent in doing nothing I desired that Williams & Green would examine the ground & form something in which we might have a possibility of succeeding before the Winter which would cover in that season 400 men & so far to finish it that no insults might be feared from small Arms, of which Williams sent Montessor a plan and we have proceeded upon it as I desired Mr. Williams in his post Script to say that I determined to try how far we are to proceed upon it, the body of the place will not be large but Bastions will contain Room for the Guns Eight in Each Bastion which with the Advantage of the Situation and guns sufficient for the post will make it pretty Strong I am told every way preferable to Fort Edward, and if it is thought hereafter not respectable a Fortification may be made to which this as it is the highest ground may serve for a good Citadel but as I always doubt my own judgment I called all the Colonels together who were unanimously of Opinion to proceed on what we have now been about in preparing & executing near a month which I think to pick to pieces would be discouraging for such Troops who are already but indifferently inclined to work for no pay, I inclose the Colonels Opinion to you tho I am Confident you will always be so good to me as to believe I shall ever do that which occurs to me to comply with your commands & do every thing possible with me to forward the Service. ...Col. Montessor's plan which has all along been My Favorite had it been thought practicable in the time, he Calculates it to be executed by 2000 men in three months, for this Month past I could never above 400 men to Work out of the Troops here fit for duty which has never exceeded 1100. Guards Piquets Covering parties & perpetual Scouts taking up the rest, including a Capt. & three Subs. with 130 Men I am obliged to employ on the Mohawks River as Bateaux-men between this and Schenectady.<sup>17</sup>

General Abercromby responded to Stanwix's letter telling him of the decision to continue building the fort according to Williams' plan following these terms: "All I shall say upon it is, that —now the Men which were with Colo. Bradstreet are—Returned, I expect that Lieut. Williams will fulfill his Engagement, and so far finish the Present Fort, as to take tolerable Lodgments for 400 Men, and tenable against Musketry for the Ensuing Winter, — upon Failure of which he must be answerable for the Consequences."<sup>18</sup>

This exchange between the generals helps identify some of the problems that attended building the fort. One source of trouble — one so common that it easy to overlook — was the product of geography. Abercromby's headquarters during much of the autumn was at Lake George. Eyres was on his personal staff and usually at headquarters. Montessor was nearby at Fort Edward; and Stanwix and Williams were at the headwaters of the Mohawk. By the water route, the distance between Oneida Station and Lake George was approximately 160 miles, no great

distance by twentieth-century standards, but in a primitive environment the time consumed in exchanging correspondence was a matter of days.

Another problem, one closely related to distance, was that of supply. All of the tools and provisions had to be conveyed up the Mohawk from Schenectady, a time-consuming operation when the supplies were in stock; and if the stores in the depot lacked what was needed, the problem was compounded. Then too, according to Stanwix's report, manning the bateaux required four officers and 130 men.

Another drain on Stanwix's available manpower was the necessity to provide for the security of his station. Reconnaissance parties were constantly on patrol to guard against surprise, for he dared not relax his vigilance, even after Bradstreet's success on Lake Ontario. Pickets, camp guards, and covering parties for the work details sent into the woods to cut timber limited the number of men who could be working on the construction. Sickness, injuries, and malingering took their toll. Prior to the return of Bradstreet's column, the largest number of men that Stanwix had on duty was 1,100, of whom never more than 400 were available for work on the fort.

The return of the troops from Lake Ontario made more men available, but they were less numerous than the generals and Montrossor had expected, as Stanwix's letter to Abercromby of September 29 demonstrated:

...you will perceive the great falling off of our members of which you will of Lt. Col. Bradstreet see near a thousand, numbers of which are dead or dying daily for . . . that Enterprise was performed with so much expedition & fatigue that few could well bear it, & I believe his great sweep was wholly owing to it. So that of the 5600 men you ordered for the services only 2750 remained fit for duty the 20th of the month near one half, & the sick list increasing very fast which is supposed to be owing to their living wholly upon salt pork without peas, roots or greens.<sup>19</sup>

In spite of the limited number of men available, General Stanwix expected to have the new fort ready for 400 men and secure against small arms by the first of December.

As the autumn advanced, the euphoria resulting from Bradstreet's success dissipated under persistent rumors that the French and their allies were about to avenge themselves upon the western frontier. Sir William Johnson and General Stanwix warned Abercromby that friendly Indians were bringing frequent news of approaching attacks.<sup>20</sup> The force at the Carrying Place was vulnerable to attacks on working parties and bateaux men; and a large French and Indian force could threaten the camp by attack or, less probable, isolation. The settlements from German Flats eastward to west of Schenectady were in greater danger. Stanwix's troops were the keystone of the defense of the Mohawk frontier, and General Abercromby wrote their commander:

...it-becomes necessary for You to be on Your Guard and to keep out constant Scouts to bring You Intelligence of the Motions not only of the French, but our supposed faithful Allies the Six Nations; For which Purpose You will send out a Scout somewhat stronger . . . , to follow Luttridge the Day after his Departure from you, and give them the same Instructions with this Difference that they are to avoid Luttridge's Tracts [tracks], by which means I should hope you will discover the Intentions of the Enemy both public and secret; And to enable You to frustrate their Designs the better, I have ordered Fraser's Battalion of Highlanders, lately returned with M. G. [Major General] Amherst from the Eastward to join you forthwith. I should have sent You a stronger Reinforcement, But I am apprehensive You will not have Provisions enough to maintain them at present.

## The Building of Fort Stanwix

However, as from the Applications that have repeatedly been made to the Agent Victualers for this Month past to supply this Deficiency, there is Reason to hope they will soon be provided with a proper Quantity, if You find it necessary, you shall, upon Requisition, be further strengthened, either from the Troops here, or the Regiments that are come with the Royal, Vizt the 17th. 47th. 48th. & 63d. which are all encamped at Albany, and are stopped there, as it has not been judged Advisable or practicable to employ them this Season this Way, by Reason of it's being too far advanced, and the Enemy from repeated intelligence too well prepared for our reception.<sup>21</sup>

Stanwix had asked Headquarters for additional cannon, and Abercromby replied:

...the proportion of ordnance for the Defense of your Post ... has been laid before the proper officer, and it is found far beyond what is requisite; nevertheless, had it been in my Power to furnish you with it, I should not have objected to sending it; but it seems we have no more than two 18 Pounders Iron at Albany that have Carriages; it is true there are more at Schenectady, but as they want Carriages they can be of no Use to You at present I have sent Orders to Mr. Furnis at New York, to make Application to the Lieut. Govr: They certainly might spare some from thence, and they are sufficiently interested in the Defense of the Frontiers not to refuse them: but I do not find they are much inclined to do anything for themselves, and, as is customary in this Country would willingly exempt themselves from any Share in the Means to secure themselves.<sup>22</sup>

Rumors of hostile activity continued to reach General Abercromby at Lake George; and in addition to the Highlanders, the Second Battalion of the Royal Regiment was ordered to the Mohawk. When a report reached Headquarters that Stanwix's camp was invested, Colonel Benton of the Royal Regiment ordered the Battalion's grenadier and light infantry companies to march from Greenbush to Schenectady to be ready to proceed to the Oneida Carrying Place, if the report proved to be accurate.<sup>23</sup>

The fear of a Franco-Indian attack and approaching winter made the completion and arming of the fort increasingly urgent. Both Abercromby and Stanwix urged the lieutenant governor of New York to use his influence to obtain cannon, and an effort was made to purchase pieces brought into New York City by privateers.<sup>24</sup>

The reconnaissance patrols that went out from Oneida returned with conflicting reports: some claimed that they had seen the enemy, while others reported no evidence of either French or hostile Indian parties. Stanwix continued to fear that the enemy intended to "disturb our Works," although the Indians at Oneida Castle told him that his position was so strong that there was nothing to fear from any hostiles in the area. As the autumn advanced, Stanwix held his breath, hoping that no attack would be made before his fort was ready for winter. On October 22 he expressed himself as follows:

...if we hear nothing certain of any strong Armament with Artillery between this & the beginning of November we may give up all expectation of any unseasonable Visit for this approaching winter, which will enable us to carry our Fort all round en barbet cover our Casemates for 400 men & Complete our Ditch & Glassic [sic], and I am hopeful I shall be able to leave here six months provisions for that number, 250 beds will be wanting & absolutely necessary as the Company of Rangers are to stay which I can well accommodate in good huts without the works.<sup>25</sup>

Artillery for the new fort continued to be the subject of considerable concern for both Stanwix and Abercromby. The former had submitted "calculations" that members of the latter's staff

considered excessive; and while there were tubes in the Schenectady depot, there were no carriages, which meant that there was no artillery immediately available. As has been noted, appeals were made to the lieutenant governor, and attempts were made to purchase cannon from privateers. On October 22 Stanwix was still trying to get the guns that his post needed.

At Abercomby's suggestion, he wrote to Lieutenant Governor De Lancey asking him to use his good offices in persuading the province to contribute six each 18-pounders, 12-pounders, 9-pounders, and 6-pounders, with 8,000 shot for each piece of ordnance, promising him that the province would be reimbursed with guns from England or Louisbourg. He also wrote Abercromby that he believed some of the Louisbourg cannon should be sent to the Oneida post.

General Stanwix was especially eager to have armament on hand because the fort was ready to accommodate the cannon. By October 22, a bomb-proof magazine with a capacity of 2,000 barrels had been installed under the southeast bastion. Other work accomplished included "seven good Hutts, Brick chimneys, Shingled floor'd & lined with and at least two good Glass windows in each & very sufficient for twenty one officers." The general lived in one "and never desired a warmer a more comfortable or better room, and 'tis by much the worst of them."

Although the work was progressing, it was far from being free of problems. The reports of hostile activity had hindered construction:

...& in order to get forward was obliged to send for some Carpenters, & Mr. Dice has been of infinite use to us, but experience of this Sort when works are carried to a Certain degree of perfection are seldom found ...these troops at first produced but few Carpenters and now the woods become Cold & Wet scarce at all, and indeed there is such a surprising falling off from the working men of these Battalions that from 5600 intended for the service this way that not 1500 left fit for duty & these I am sending down sick in Boat loads every day. I think all the provincials whilst with me have behaved well but they are really worn out, worked down & fairly jaded with Fatigue, to which the Bateaux Service and Caderaqui [Bradstreet's expedition] has not a little Contributed — Colonel Williams & Colo. Doty's Boston Battalions their time is out the First of November and they begin to be impatient to be gone Jersey Regiment: their time out the 15th of November; no time fixed for the New York or Rhode Islanders but end with the Campaign, please as soon as you can — let me know when these several Regiments are to be dismiss'd.<sup>26</sup>

Stanwix's personal situation was serious — more so than the correspondence might indicate. He had been ordered to use only the provincial soldiers in the construction, partly for reasons of economy and because Abercromby and Montrossor believed that a number of troops had experience as carpenters. While probably many of the men knew something about domestic carpentry, few if any had ever engaged in a major construction at all comparable to building a fort. Of course, most of them were capable of cutting timber and digging ditches, and that was the work that required the most hands.

As we have seen, military duties and sickness contributed their share in slowing construction. But as winter approached, weather compounded every problem: getting the fort ready for winter, and the expiration of the troops' terms of service. Although the provincial council extended the terms of service of the Massachusetts levies by fifteen days the situation remained critical. Alarms continued to demand extraordinary security measures, drawing men away from construction details; and civilian carpenters were scarce on the frontier and those in Albany and Schenectady were reluctant to work under the conditions of danger and discomfort that prevailed.

## The Building of Fort Stanwix

On October 30 Abercromby wrote to Stanwix from Albany concerning the final stages of the year's work and plans for the winter:

I see with Pleasure the Forwardness your present Post was in, and that we may expect by the 2d or 3d. of next Month to have it so far finished, as to lodge and Cover it's intended Garrison against every Insult, but Artillery, which I join in opinion with you, soon be no Room to apprehend anything from, as the Season advances fast in which the Roads will render it impracticable for the Enemy to bring any against it. — I have given Direction for the providing of the Beds, Snow Shoes, & Provisions You say will be necessary and the D.Q.M.G. is to see them forthwith sent up—With Regard to the Proportion of Ordnance & its Attrail, I am sorry it is not in my Power to furnish You with the Whole of Your Demands, since you remain of Opinion that You could well dispose of it: Notwithstanding my Requisition to the Lieut. Governor; backed by Your very proper Letter to the same Purpose, we have not been able to obtain more than ten 12 and two 9 Ponders, Iron — Ordnance, mounted on Garrison Carriages, which Mr. Furniss by his Letter of the 23d. was to ship the next day for this — whence, so soon as it Arrives it shall be forwarded to You; and so soon as Capt. Ord come down here, which will be in a few Days, I shall settle with him the Officers and Men — of the Department under his command, that can be spared for the Oneida Station; but I must observe to you, that they will fall far short of what You ask, as I have not in my Department, above 80 Men of that Branch, out of which some are to remain here and others to be left at Fort Edward.

As I see that You Convenience, and intend to hut the Rangers, I suppose You propose the Garrison Should consist of 400 Regulars exclusive of them and the Small Detachment of Artillery, and as I intend that Colo. Fraser's Battalion should furnish that Garrison you will either leave them be detachment or Companies as you see best, and the Remainder of that Battalion, I am informed by Colo. Bradstreet can be very well cantoned in the District of Conajohary & Stone Arabia, which Justice Fry has promised the Deputy Qr. Mr. Gen. to prepare and hold in Readiness for them.

I have had a letter from Lieut. Williams, desiring that he might be relieved, but as I have nobody in that Branch, whose Department is not already settled & of Nowise none to send in his Room, You will please to tell him that he must remain there, and indeed nobody can be more proper for it than himself, as he will be at hand so soon as the Weather permits to finish the Work.

With Regard to the provincial Troops, you may dismiss them so soon as Your Works will permit; particularly the Massachusetts & Rhode Island People, who have a long Ways home and the Roads daily growing bad; besides which, the Bostoners, who with me, are already on their March, which I dare say will make Your's plead hard for their Discharge: The sooner they were all gone, would be but better as it would be a great saving in the Article of Provisions, especially in the present Scarcity; However, so long as You can not do without them to finish the Fort fit for the Reception of the Garrison, You must keep them; But at the same Time, such of them as are sick and unfit for Duty, might very well be sent Down immediately as otherwise they will consume a great Quantity of Provisions to no Manner of Purpose. The Troops destined to be under Your Command this Winter, and those going Down, will be here I expect in a few Days, where I shall likewise be glad to see you, so soon as you can conveniently leave Your present post.<sup>27</sup>

By mid-November 1758 Stanwix's work at Oneida Station was completed, and he moved his headquarters to Albany, where he commanded the troops posted on the Mohawk and in northern New York.

The first description of the fort that has survived is Colonel Montessor's, which together with a copy of the plan, shows the fort's situation at the close of the first season's work. The Colonel wrote:

This fort was begun 23d August 1758 by the troops under the Command of Brigdr Genl. Stanwix and finished en Barbette<sup>28</sup> as Represented in the draught. of Nov. 18, 1758 the yellow shows what parts are unfinished **A** is a small creek wch runs southward and has its head from three springs 500 yards above the Fort. **B.** The Road from the Landing Place on the Mohawk River over the Carrying place to Fort Niewport. **C.** a section thro **DE** taking in the Ditch the Common breadth of 40 and not the Breadth as it is upon the middle of the Curtain. The fort is built on a Level spot of Ground Composed of Pebble Stone mixed wt Gravel and Sand is to the Eastward and Southward 19ft. above the Level of the Swamps and Low Lands. To the Northward the Ground is much on a Level with the fort, but to the Westward it descends gradually for three Quarters of a Mile to Fort Niewport to the Common Level of the Swamps. To the West, North and Eastward, the woods are Cleared between 3 and 400 hundred yards and to the Southward 700 yards. **FA** Magazine 65 foot long by 16 ft wide Bomb Proof. The logs of wch the fort is built are generally 2 ft thick, flatted on the upper and under sides. The Casementes [sic] (at present Barracks) are covered wt two teer of Square timber from 12 to 24 Ins thick as Represented in the Profil.<sup>29</sup>

The colonel's description is very useful and probably represents as good a picture of the fort as can be had. However, it and the drawing must be used with some caution. For instance, they do not include the seven "hutts" for officers that Stanwix mentioned in his letter of October 22. Secondly, he described the fort as being completed "en Barbette," but the plan shows forty-three embrasures. Thirdly, there is a contemporary, though much less detailed, plan that was enclosed in a letter from General Abercromby to Prime Minister William Pitt, dated November 25, 1758, that gives different dimensions. The plan that accompanied Montessor's description gave the length between the points of the bastions as 350 feet. The one that accompanied Abercromby's letter showed a distance of 330 feet.<sup>30</sup> An explanation of the differences may be that both represent preliminary plans — not actual construction drawings.

The 400 men from Fraser's Highlanders and the detail of Royal Artillery spent the winter of 1758-59 in the new fort, while the ranger detachment occupied huts in a camp outside its walls. It was a strong force for the Carrying Place, and the frontier west of German Flats was more secure than it had been since before the opening of hostilities.

Somewhat against his wishes, John Williams remained at Fort Stanwix, as the new post was coming to be called, in order to be on hand to complete the work whenever the weather permitted. Sometime during the winter or summer, he prepared a plan entitled "Plan of Fort Stanwix Built at Oneida Station. By Provincial Troops in 1758." This probably represents the first attempt to present an "as built" depiction of the fort by one who not only knew it first hand but was its construction superintendent, and it may be the most important single document relating to the original building of the fort.

Williams' plan shows a bastioned fort with the points of the bastions forming a square 335 feet to the side. The walls were constructed of logs laid crib fashion to a height of nine feet on the outside and eleven feet on the inside of the curtains. Their thickness at the base was slightly

## The Building of Fort Stanwix

more than twenty feet and at the top eighteen feet. The southeast bastion, under which the magazine was located, was nine feet on the outside and fifteen and a half on the inside. The other three bastions may have had higher ramparts than the curtains, but this is not reflected in the plan. The bastions were 120 feet deep, with two sides ca. thirty-eight feet long and two ninety feet. The curtains measured ca. 140 feet. The sally-port, about ten feet wide, was located in the center of the south curtain. Another, narrower gateway about five feet wide in the east curtain gave access to the covered way and thence to the creek.

Inside the fort were four casemates, the roofs of which formed the terreplein for the curtains. These were log structures, built to a height of ten feet in front and approximately eight and a half in the rear. The external depth from the front to the curtain wall was approximately twenty feet. The northern and western casemates extended 119 feet in front and 145 in the rear. The other two casemates were divided by the sally-port and east gate. The south-western one measured fifty by sixty feet; the south-eastern fifty-eight by sixty; the east-southern fifty-eight feet square; and the east-northern fifty-two by sixty. The northern and western casemates were divided into three sets of quarters, each with a door and three windows opening onto the parade. The southern casemates consisted of one unit per structure, each with a door and six windows. The eastern ones consisted of one unit per structure, each with a door and four windows. Each unit was heated by a fire-place with a brick chimney that extended above the terreplein.

Nineteen huts were located in the parade, most of them officer's quarters, but one or more may have been kitchens. The plan does not provide details, but General Stanwix described the one he occupied as being one of the "worst," saying that they had brick chimneys, were shingled, floored, and having at least two glass windows.<sup>31</sup>

The magazine was located beneath the southeast bastion. It was a bomb-proofed structure, measuring on the inside ca. sixty-nine by nineteen feet.

Except a distance of approximately 150 feet where the bastions stood within less than forty-five feet of the stream, a ditch, twenty-one feet wide at the top and eight at the bottom, extended around the fort. A row of eight to ten feet high posts stood upright in the ditch. A similar palisade formed a V in front of the sally-port. The spoil from the ditch was piled against the walls of the fort and as a glacis outside the ditch. A "Necessary house" (latrine), reached by an elevated walk, stood over a portion of the stream opposite the south-east bastion. At the end of the ditch opposite the north-east bastion, a covered way led to the water.<sup>32</sup>

Another season of construction began at Fort Stanwix during July 1759, and the work that was accomplished during that year was recorded in a "Plan of Fort Stanwix Showing what Works were done at that Post — from July to December 1759."<sup>33</sup> Among the additions were two huts for the officers, bringing the total in the Parade to twenty-one. Chimneys were completed or replaced for some of the officers' quarters. New bedsteads were installed in the casemates. Six cannon platforms were installed on the bastions. The parapet of the northwest "flag" bastion was raised four feet, embrasures created, and a firing step installed. The ramparts of all the bastions were raised. The ditch was widened to twenty-six feet at the bottom and forty at the top. The parapet of the curtains was raised by placing barrels and horizontal logs on the parapets of the curtains. A floor was installed in the magazine, and a cellar for garden stuff was to be built under the southeast bastion. Horizontal pickets were installed on the northeast bastion.

Another, apparently contemporary, plan shows the fort with the same features, minus the "Necessary" and covered way to the stream and without a ditch on the eastern side. The "flag" bastion is shown with embrasures. A store-house, with its western end palisaded, is shown

west of the fort. This plan shows a much smaller fort with the sides of the square formed by the bastions only ca. 230 feet long, which probably means that the indicated scale of one inch to 100 feet is in error.<sup>34</sup>

While Fort Stanwix took form, William Pitt prosecuted the war with the vigor, boldness, and imperial vision that won him a place in history. As Brigadier John Forbes advanced westward, the French blew up Fort Duquesne. Forbes died shortly thereafter, and General Stanwix replaced him with orders to consolidate the British victory in the Ohio Valley. Louisbourg fell, and its victor, Jeffrey Amherst, replaced Abercromby as commander-in-chief. James Wolfe distinguished himself at Louisbourg and was given the command that led him to Quebec and immortality. Back in London, Pitt was preparing plans for the expulsion of the French from North America that astonished some of his fellows and must have made General Amherst wonder whether His Majesty's minister knew what he proposed: Invade Canada, launch an attack along the southern frontier, re-establish the fort at Oswego — even attack Fort Niagara. The last was accomplished in late spring and summer of 1759, and Brigadier John Prideaux's and Sir William Johnson's forces passed the new fort on their way to Lake Ontario and Niagara.

In the meantime, money and labor were being expended in improving Fort Stanwix. In 1761 it was still unfinished, with completion anticipated the following year. Yet, even as it was being completed, its importance was diminishing. The defeat of the French in the west and the termination of hostilities reduced the purpose of the fort to showing the flag among the Iroquois. By 1761 the garrison was down to fifty men.<sup>35</sup>

By the end of the war, the fort was a strong post with massive log and earthen walls built up so that all the bastions and curtains were capped by embrasured parapets. The ditch on the eastern side was apparently filled in, but a stockade extended along that face. Two ravelins, one covering the sally-port and a smaller one for the gate leading the stream, were constructed between 1759 and 1764. The officers' huts were replaced by two buildings measuring 120 by twenty feet and one measuring thirty-five by twenty.<sup>36</sup>

The Peace of Paris ended the Seven Years War in 1763, and Britain's attention turned from conquest to consolidating and administering the Empire. For the American Colonies, that meant the end of "salutary neglect," and Parliament took a more active interest in making the colonies contributing members of the Empire. A series of acts flowed out of London affecting trade, customs, colonial administration, land speculation, and Indian affairs; and most of them collided with an American interest. The product was the American Revolution that ended with independence and the new nation's inheriting most of the problems that had caused the separation. But that gets ahead of our story of Fort Stanwix.

However, as a part of the military establishment on the frontier, the fort shared the historic scene. As has been noted, its primary function after the elimination of the French threat was to provide for an imperial presence in the Iroquois country, particularly among the Oneidas. The Indians' response to that presence was mixed. Insofar as it encouraged increased trade, they favored the existence of posts that would facilitate such commercial contacts. On the other hand, the Indians had acquiesced in the building of Fort Stanwix and other installations on the condition that they would be demolished after the war.<sup>37</sup> The maintenance of the forts during the post-war years was a source of irritation to the Iroquois that Sir William Johnson had to cope with in his relations with the tribes. At the same time, forces were working that made a wholesale abandonment of the war-time forts unthinkable. The western tribes, resentful of official arrogance, the dishonesty of traders, and their exclusion from consultation when the

## The Building of Fort Stanwix

French surrendered the western posts, and fearful of the advancing English settlements, plotted to expel the British.

In the spring of 1763, the western frontier erupted into war along a thousand-mile front. One after another, the posts in the formerly French territory fell, until only Fort Pitt, Detroit, and Niagara stood fast. Frontier settlements were ravaged, and according to some accounts, more people died in 1763 than in 1759, at the height of the Seven Years' War. Not until July 1766, when Sir William met the hostiles in a council at Oswego, did the war end with acknowledgement of British sovereignty and Pontiac's pardon.<sup>38</sup>

With the frontier ablaze, the British would not abide by the promise to demilitarize the intermediate zone just east of the frontier. Instead of destroying Fort Stanwix, attention was directed toward its repair. Engineer Lt. George Demler inspected it and found it in a surprisingly bad state. The southeast bastion, which covered the magazine and cellar, was in an especially dilapidated condition, with its "whole Face fallen down." The western half of the south curtain and the southwest bastion were "so rotten that they can not stand over this winter." The casemates were uninhabitable and beyond repair.<sup>39</sup>

The lieutenant began repairing the fort on July 1, 1764. Civilian artificers and laborers carried out the work at a cost of 140 pounds, five shillings, ten pence New York currency; and by the end of the season they had accomplished a surprising amount of repair.<sup>40</sup> During that time the southeast and southwest bastions and the curtains were repaired and made *en barbette*. The casemates were rebuilt, and chimneys installed in the officers' barracks. The northwest and northeast bastions were rebuilt with embrasured parapets. A covered passageway from the east gate to the small ravelin was built of wood and earth.<sup>41</sup> The escarpment and covered way (glacis) were sodded and a small parapet was installed on the covered way. By the end of the year, work remained to be done on the southern bastions, the parapet on the southeast end of the covered way, the earthen part of the covered passage to the eastern ravelin, and the closing of the northeast end of the ditch by completing the covered way.<sup>43</sup> Whether these were completed during subsequent periods of work is uncertain. More money was expended in early 1765 and in 1767. Yet on May 27 of the latter, Maj. Gen. Thomas Gage recommended to the Secretary of State, the Earl of Shelburne, that Stanwix be abandoned "in order to lessen expenses." The fort was in ruins and not important enough to merit repairs necessary to make it tenable. He proposed to withdraw the small garrison and leave the fort in the care of an "old half-pay officer" on the condition that he should return everything to the Crown when "required for the King's service."<sup>44</sup> The next year, John Lees, a Quebec merchant, wrote in his Journal, describing the fort as a "neat little fortification built of wood & fit to garrison 3 Regiments but it [is] now falling all to ruins. There is a half pay officer with a Corporal & his men that keep Possession of it, intended chiefly for forwarding Expresses to the Officers at the upper Forts: the country is entirely unsettled round this Fort.—"<sup>45</sup>

Thus by the year of the great Indian congress that negotiated the Treaty of Fort Stanwix the fort had become a dilapidated inactive post. Although it is not the purpose of this monograph to provide an in-depth study of that treaty, a brief account is in order.

Britain's victory over her arch-rival, France, had expelled that power from the North American mainland, leaving her with greatly expanded possessions, incorporating not only Canada and Florida, but also the vast region between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River, a region rich in lands and furs and inhabited by Indian tribes, some of which had been active allies of France. To the government in Whitehall, this acquisition was a valuable territory that required imperial policies that would provide for the orderly settlement of western lands and peaceful

relations with the Indians. To those ends, the King issued the Proclamation of 1763 that imposed a temporary ban on settlement west of a line running north and south along the crest of the Appalachians, reiterating a pledge made to the western tribes by the Treaty of Easton (1758) to respect native claims and to refrain from settling on them without the Indians' consent.

The Proclamation offended important American interests and values. The ignorance of its authors had left several hundred whites west of the Proclamation Line in Indian territory. More fundamental was its violation of the common-sense American belief, amounting to an article of faith, that white men were destined to occupy and exploit western lands and that the Indians must be driven away or destroyed. Settlers, land speculators, and fur-traders competed for the new lands, but they agreed in opposing any form of regulation, especially if it emanated from London, that limited their freedom of action.<sup>46</sup>

The inherent weaknesses of the policy that produced the Proclamation and pressure from economy-minded members of Parliament, greedy speculators, and disgruntled traders forced the British government to revise its frontier policy. A shake-up in the ministry resulted in centering control of American affairs in the new office, Secretary for the Colonies, which was assumed by Lord Hillsborough in January 1768.

Hillsborough prepared a set of recommendations that was accepted by the cabinet in March that contained the first practical plan for the North American west yet developed. While the Indian superintendencies were retained, their powers were limited to imperial functions: land purchases from the tribes, readjustments of the Proclamation line, and settling diplomatic problems. Local matters, including regulation of the fur trade, were left in the control of the colonies. This made the western posts that had been the centers for the trade unnecessary, and all were abandoned except those at Detroit, Niagara, and Mackinac, which were retained for defense. Instead of establishing three western colonies, as had been demanded by expansionists, Hillsborough tried to satisfy them by ordering the Proclamation line shifted westward.

General Thomas Gage, commander of the British army in North America, complied with the terms of the new policy; and within a year withdrew all the western garrisons except Detroit, Niagara, Mackinac, Fort Pitt, and Fort de Chartres. The superintendents dismantled their elaborate trade establishment to the delight of the fur traders, who swept into the west to set up their private posts through the northern country.

Orders were received by John Stuart and Sir William Johnson, Indian Superintendents for the Southern and Northern Departments respectively. Sir William's task was to extend the western boundary line from the mouth of the Great Kanawha River in [West] Virginia across Pennsylvania to the Indian village Owego near the southern border of New York, leaving the troublesome problem of determining the bounds of the Iroquois territory to later negotiations. To accomplish this delicate undertaking, he called a congress of most of the northern tribes to meet at Fort Stanwix during November 1768.

Johnson's action was a signal for speculators along the entire frontier to go into action. In Virginia, they pressured the government to appoint Dr. Thomas Walker, an active land-grabber, as the colony's delegate to the conference; and he set out for Fort Stanwix committed to open as much of Kentucky as possible to settlement. Pennsylvania officials impressed their commissioners with the necessity of obtaining the region of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River. In New York, the Indiana Company's leaders set about persuading Sir William to guarantee that their interests would profit. In June, Samuel Wharton, William Trent, and George

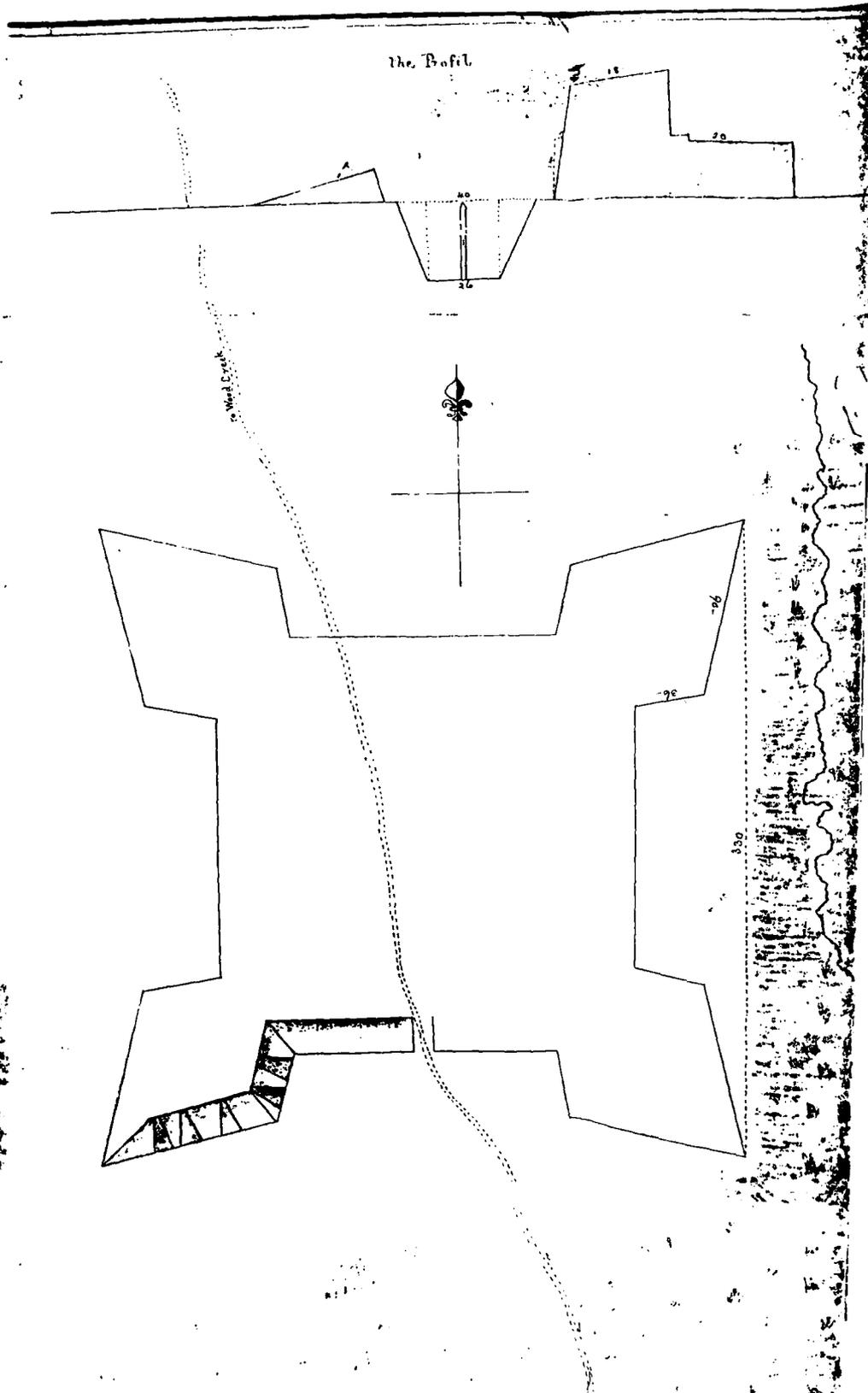
## The Building of Fort Stanwix

Croghan met Johnson at New London, Connecticut, and discussed the best ways to ensure success; and he committed himself to obtaining from the Indians a specific grant for the Indiana Company's leaders. Johnson, thus, deliberately conspired to violate his instructions, which had directed him to ratify a line he had discussed with the tribal leaders in 1765. Under no circumstances, was he to enlarge the boundary from the mouth of the Great Kanawha down the Ohio to the Cherokee [Tennessee] River.

When the conference convened, 3,400 Indians, commissioners from New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, New Jersey, and Connecticut assembled within the dilapidated fort's walls. Lines were clearly drawn. On one side was the Virginia interest, whose objective was two-fold: to open Kentucky and to keep any outside company from exploiting that colony's back country. On the other was the leadership of the Indiana Company, hungrily promoting their effort to obtain their grant in the upper Ohio, quite aware that the region lay within Virginia's northwest. Because of Johnson's association, the latter group had the advantage. With his help, they persuaded the Iroquois to sell them the 1,800,000 acres they wanted on November 3, but Virginia's consent was required. Walker was appeased by Johnson's extending the new boundary line past the mouth of the Great Kanawha to the Tennessee River. This would force the Southern Superintendent, Stuart to redraw the southern part of the line in a manner that would open the lands of the Greenbrier and Loyal Companies to settlement or confuse the entire boundary so completely that all the Kentucky country would be thrown open to unregulated speculation.

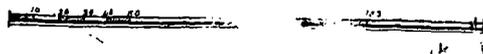
The treaty was anti-climatic — the important business had already been conducted by the commissioners in private, unrecorded sessions. According to the terms of the treaty, signed November 5, the line began, not at Oswego, but near Fort Stanwix, then west across Pennsylvania to open the Susquehanna Forks area, and thence along the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers to the mouth of the Tennessee. In return for ceding their claims to the lands, the Indians received 10,460 pounds in gifts. Sir William was aware of the fact that he had violated his instructions and deranged the entire boundary demarcation system, at the same time angering the Delawares, Shawnees, and Cherokees by defrauding them of their hunting lands in the Ohio country, to which they, not the Iroquois Confederacy, had the better claim. He was intelligent enough to know that the treaty left the whole western frontier in turmoil. The real thrust of the treaty was revealed in the shift of the boundary to the mouth of the Tennessee, which showed that the line of demarcation could be shifted westward by any speculators with sufficient influence. The company of famous and near-famous men: Benjamin and William Franklin, Samuel Wharton, George Croghan, William Trent, and Sir William Johnson, had left a heritage of cupidity that testified to the sordidness that characterized much of the history of the development of western lands.<sup>47</sup>

Six years after the negotiation of the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, Governor William Tryon reported that Fort Stanwix had been dismantled.<sup>48</sup> Within a decade and half after its establishment, the fort at the Oneida Carrying Place seemed to have fulfilled its historic mission. But a new career would open for it during the War for American Independence that won it a new and more important place in history.



PLAN of Fort STANWISE

Scale of 50 Feet to a Inch.



REPRODUCED FROM THE COLLECTIONS  
OF THE MANUSCRIPT DIVISION  
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

## The Building of Fort Stanwix

### Endnotes:

---

- <sup>1</sup> Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe*, I, 8-9; Bouganville, "Journal, Summary of M. de Beletre's Campaign," in O'Callaghan, *Documents*, X, 672.
- <sup>2</sup> Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe*, 90-91.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-118; 137-70.
- <sup>4</sup> C. O. 5/50, ltr., Abercromby to William Pitt, July 12, 1758.
- <sup>5</sup> "Report of Proceedings with the Confederate Nations of Indians at a Conference at Canajohary;" ltr., Johnson to the Lords of Trade, November 13, 1763, in O'Callaghan, *Documents*, VII, 378 ff.
- <sup>6</sup> James Abercromby Papers, Huntington Library, "Captain Green's Observations on Col. Montessor's Plan for a Post at the Oneida Carrying Place," n. d.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> O'Callaghan, *Documents*, IV, 525-26.
- <sup>9</sup> Abercromby Papers, ltrs., Stanwix to Abercromby, July 20, 1758; Abercromby to Stanwix, July 23, 1758.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, ltrs., Stanwix to Abercromby, July 20 and 24, 1758.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Abercromby to Stanwix, 27 July, 1758.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Stanwix to Abercromby, July 20, 1758.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Stanwix to Abercromby, Aug. 20, 1758; "Return of His Majesty's Troops Detched from the Oneida Station — 15<sup>th</sup> August 1758 under the Command of Lieut Colonel Bradstreet." Appendix II.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr. Stanwix to Abercromby, Aug. 20, 1758.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Stanwix to Abercromby, Sept. 5, 1758.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Stanwix to Abercromby, Sept. 7, 1758.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Stanwix to Abercromby, Sept. 7, 1758.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Abercromby to Stanwix, Sept. 12, 1758.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Stanwix to Abercromby, Sept. 29, 1758.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*; William Johnson Papers, New York State Library, Albany, ltrs. Johnson to Abercromby, Sept. 30 and Oct. 3, 1758.
- <sup>21</sup> Abercromby Papers, ltr. Abercromby to Stanwix, Oct. 7, 1758.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Abercromby to Stanwix, Oct. 13, 1758.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Stanwix to Abercromby, Oct. 22, 1758.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Abercromby to Stanwix, October 30, 1758.
- <sup>28</sup> *En Barbette* — built in such a manner that fire would be directed over a parapet rather than through embrasures
- <sup>29</sup> C.O. 5/50.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* See plan opposite.
- <sup>31</sup> Abercromby Papers, ltr., Stanwix to Abercromby, October 22, 1758.
- <sup>32</sup> British Museum, Crown Map Collection, CXXI, 99. Copy in Map Division, Library of Congress. Appendix III. Schuyler to Gates, August 3, 1776.
- <sup>33</sup> British Museum, Crown Map Collection, CXXI, 101. Appendix IV.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, CXXXI, 100. Appendix V.
- <sup>35</sup> Sir William Johnson Papers.
- <sup>36</sup> Crown Collection, CXXI, 103, "A Sketch of Fort Stanwix, with its Buildings & Outworks, November 18th, 1764." Appendix VI.
- <sup>37</sup> *Supra.*, 19.
- <sup>38</sup> Francis Parkman's *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* is an old, but beautifully written and generally useful study of the broad story of this rather neglected subject.
- <sup>39</sup> Crown Map CXXI, 103. Appendix VI.
- <sup>40</sup> Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Audit Office Records (M. G. 12, El, Bundle 2531, Roll 662).
- <sup>41</sup> See Crown Map CXXI, 102, Sections A.B. and C.D. Appendix VII.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>44</sup> O'Callaghan, *Documents*, VII, 985, 989.

- <sup>45</sup> British Museum, Additional Manuscripts, 21661, Haldimand Papers from Canadian Archives Report, 1884, "Correspondence of General Haldimand to General Jeffrey Amherst," Doc. 28605. "Journal of J.L. [John Lees] of Quebec Merchant."
- <sup>46</sup> Oliver M. Dickerson, *American Colonial Government 1696-1765* (New York, 1962), 22-57; Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion, A History of the American Frontier* (New York, 1967), 137-140; Cecil B. Currey, *Road To Revolution, Benjamin Franklin in England, 1765-1775* (Garden City, 1968), 380, 392.
- <sup>47</sup> Currey, *op. cit.*, 237-240; Jack Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness* (Lincoln, 1962), 172-73; Nicholas B. Wainwright, *George Croghan, Wilderness Diplomat* (Chapel Hill, 1959), 260-67.
- <sup>48</sup> O'Callaghan, *Documents, I*, 765, London Document XLIV.

## Fort Stanwix in the Revolution Rebuilding

The end of the Colonial period found the western and northern portions of the Province of New York still in varying degrees frontier in nature. Much of the western part continued to be Iroquois country. The Confederacy had lost much of its early strength; and its people, especially the Mohawks, Onandagas, and Oneidas, were becoming more "civilized" and dependent on the whites. The Mohawk Valley was thus a region where the races met in frequent contact, and relations between them were an important subject for the local people and the provincial government. Sir William Johnson, who from 1756 until his death on the eve of the Revolution was Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the tribes north of the Ohio River, was the valley's dominant personality. Its white population was a mixture of German, Scottish, and English with a small number of descendants of the old colonial Dutch families. In 1772 the half of New York bordering on Canada and the Iroquois country, including all of the Mohawk Valley from about two miles west of Schenectady, was separated from Albany County and named Tryon County in honor of Governor William Tryon.

The people of the county entered the era of Revolution with divided loyalties. Communities and families split as some members aligned themselves with the rebellious colonists, while others remained loyal to England and its provincial administration or hoped to remain aloof from the war. For many the choice was agonizing as men found themselves forced to choose from among conflicting interests. For the Germans, with no sentimental ties to England, the natural choice would seem to have been to cast their lot with the rebels, as many did. However, as they had tried to do during the Seven Years' War, some sought neutrality in a quarrel that they felt was not their concern. For others, remembering shabby usage by New York patricians like the Schuylers, who were leaders in the resistance to imperial authority, and believing that they were more likely to receive fair treatment from a royal governor than a native oligarchy, the choice was to be loyal to the Crown. Among them the Johnson influence may have been a factor. Sir William's wife, Sir John's mother, was a German, and the Palatines had found the baronet fair and sympathetic. The Highlanders were divided, but some had served in the British Army and had little love for the Hudson Valley grandees; and these remained true to their old allegiance. The English and Dutch settlers, mostly native-born, probably included more dedicated members of the "Patriot" party than did the other elements of the population. Thus to the people of the Mohawk country, the Revolution had many of the characteristics of a civil war.

Leadership of the Loyalists centered in the family of Sir William Johnson. His political heirs were his son, Sir John; his nephew, son-in-law, and successor to the superintendency, Guy Johnson; another son-in-law, Daniel Claus; and John Butler, who had been Sir William's deputy. Closely associated with them was Joseph Brant (Thayendanege), Sir William's secretary and brother of Molly Brant, his Mohawk mistress. Sir John, hereditary head of the family and of the imperial interest, undertook to organize the valley's Loyalists and Indians into a provincial force; but his efforts were thwarted, and he and some of his supporters were disarmed and placed on parole. Fearful that pro-British elements might yet rally on the Johnsons, the state's revolutionary leadership resolved to arrest him. When he learned that his family's old rival, Philip Schuyler, was sending a force under Colonel Dayton to carry out that resolution, he escaped to Canada in May 1776, where he was commissioned a lieutenant-colonel and authorized to raise a loyal regiment.

American concern for the security of the valley was not confined to local or provincial action. Maj. Gen. Philip John Schuyler, commanding general of the Northern Department, was aware of

the region's economic potential and its political and military significance. On June 8, 1776, he wrote to the President of the Continental Congress recommending that troops be posted at the site of Fort Stanwix and that the Indians be advised of the Continentals' intentions.<sup>1</sup> He did not wait for an answer from Congress before preparing to carry his suggestion into effect. Three days later, he informed General Washington that he was "preparing everything I can with utmost secrecy for taking post at Fort Stanwix, which I propose to do immediately after the conference with the Indians."<sup>2</sup> Congress did not delay considering the general's recommendation and on Friday, June 14:

Resolved, that General Schuyler and the other commissioners for Indian affairs in the northern department be directed immediately to hold a conference with Six Nations; to engage them in our interest upon the best terms that can be procured, and treat with them on the principles and in the decisive manner mentioned in his letter: [of June 8]

That General Schuyler's preparations for immediately taking post at Fort Stanwix, and erecting a fortification there, be approved of; and that Gen. Washington be instructed to give him directions for carrying that measure into execution.<sup>3</sup>

The Commander-in-Chief complied with the Congress's resolution;<sup>4</sup> and although the Indians postponed negotiations, General Schuyler pushed preparations for occupying the Carrying Place. He ordered Col. Elias Dayton of the 3rd New Jersey Regiment of the Continental Line to take post at Fort Stanwix with 500 men of his regiment, 150 of Colonel Cornelius Wynkoop's 4th New York Continental Regiment, 75 Tryon County Militia "intended for Canada," and an additional 200 of the county militia.<sup>5</sup>

On June 26 General Schuyler gave orders for the shipment of supplies and artillery by bateaux to be commanded by Captains Lansing and Wolcott. Strict secrecy was enjoined, and the bateaux-men were not to be informed of their destination. Preparations proceeded rapidly, and on July 1 the supplies began to move westward from Albany.<sup>6</sup> Colonel Dayton's troops assembled and reached their new post on July 23. In the meantime, Schuyler moved to German Flats to meet with the Indian delegations, in compliance with the Congress's June 14 resolution; and he reported that occupation of the Carrying Place had not given umbrage to the Indians.<sup>7</sup>

The troops, accompanied by Engineer Nathaniel Hubbell, found the fort dismantled and ruinous.<sup>8</sup> Their task was to secure the vicinity, serve as a center for patrols, and either rebuild the fort or construct a new one. General Schuyler left to Dayton's discretion the selection of the two alternatives, telling him: "As I never was at Fort Stanwix, I cannot positively recommend any particular place for erecting a Fortification, but from the best Information I have been able to procure, I am led to believe the Spot on which the old Fort stood, the most Eligible, of this you must be the Judge."<sup>9</sup> The general apparently expected Dayton to build a new fort, either on the site of the colonial one or at a new location. However, he wisely left the final decisions of how to accomplish that part of the mission to the local commander. While the surviving correspondence that has been studied does not explicitly spell out how the colonel exercised his options, enough information exists to form some conclusions.

Because the Mohawk column did not arrive at its post until the middle of July, the commander and his engineer faced the problem of building a fort that could be occupied during the next winter within a severely limited period of time. Although there were more than 900 men in the expedition, only a portion of that number could be employed at a given time in construction,

because military and camp duties absorbed part of the available manpower. The condition of the Colonial fort was the key to the solution of their problem. If it could be repaired, a great saving of time could be realized. On the other hand, if it was too dilapidated, two alternatives remained: the fort could be razed and the site reused; or another location could be selected and prepared before new construction could be commenced. Two questions require answering: Did the Revolutionary fort occupy the site of the original Fort Stanwix? Was the old fort repaired; or did Dayton's men construct a completely new facility?

The first question is answered by two cartographic representations of the Revolutionary period fort. One of these is a copy of a map by Francois de Fleury entitled, "A Sketch of the siege of FORT SCHUYLER Presented to Col. Gansevoort by L. Fleury." The other is a "Plan of Fort Stanwix" that hung in Peter Gansevoort's Albany home for many years and is now in the New York Public Library.<sup>10</sup> Both of these locate the fort on the site of the original one. (Maps are after the Appendix of this book.)

The second question can be answered with almost as much precision. The representations of the Revolutionary fort's curtains, bastions, glacis, sally ports, and covered way correspond very closely with the earlier plans, particularly Crown Maps 99, 100, and 101. Within less than a fortnight after the troops arrived, Nathaniel Hubbell wrote to General Schuyler praising the soldiers' performance and predicting, "The Fort will be Tenable by 15 Agust [sic]."<sup>11</sup> A letter from Schuyler to Washington of August 1 is couched in terms that indicate the old fort was being repaired when he wrote, "Fort Stanwix is repairing and is already so far advanced as to be defensible against light artillery."<sup>12</sup> On the same day, Colonel Dayton wrote to commander, "The Fort here which at present is very defensible against almost any Number of Small Arms we had this day the pleasure to name Fort Schuyler."<sup>13</sup> Two days later, Schuyler wrote to General Horatio Gates:

Yesterday I received information that the enemy intended to possess themselves of Oswego, and to march a body of troops to destroy the settlements on the river. I can hardly imagine that they will venture to leave Fort Stanwix in the rear, which is already in such a condition as to be tenable against small arms, and even light artillery.<sup>14</sup>

By the end of August, scarcely six weeks after beginning the work, Colonel Dayton was able to tell his commanding general that, "Unless the Enemy visit us by the first of October, I imagine they will not disturb Fort Schuyler this season."<sup>15</sup> Thus within two months, the fort was strong enough to persuade the local commander and his superior, who had spent most of the summer engaging in talks with the Indians at German Flats, that it could withstand any force the enemy was likely to bring against it that year. This had been accomplished in spite of rumors of hostile activity, continued drains on Dayton's manpower in providing scouts, and the loss of Wynkoop's two companies, who were ordered down-river on August 2.<sup>16</sup> This state of preparedness could have been achieved only by utilizing and repairing the curtains, bastions, ditch, and glacis of the original fort.

While Dayton and Schuyler had hoped to have the barracks for 400 men completed by the beginning of winter, a scarcity of bricks, boards, and nails forced deferment of that portion of the work until the next year.<sup>17</sup> But the engineer went to Albany for materials so that work could be resumed as early in the season as possible.<sup>18</sup> The correspondence does not provide details concerning other buildings constructed during 1776, but they probably included officer's quarters, a storehouse, and a powder magazine. Supplies and ordnance had been dispatched

throughout the summer and fall, and facilities for their storage during the winter would have had a high priority.<sup>19</sup>

The lack of barracks limited the number of men who could be stationed at the fort during the winter months to about 200. This worried Colonel Dayton, whose men's time would expire at the end of the year, and he wrote General Schuyler telling him that he did not expect the enemy to move against the fort, adding:

I conclude General Schuyler will order no more than about 200 men to garrison this Fort the ensuing winter as I suppose that number sufficient and not more than 200 can be properly accommodated. On this account I fear a Separation of my Regiment unless you Sir, should think it fit to order us to a more active and important station, and send a part of Colonel Elmore's Battalion which I understand is equal to mine in point of numbers, to relieve us at this Post.<sup>20</sup>

General Schuyler complied with Dayton's request and on October 9 ordered Col. Samuel Elmore's Connecticut troops to leave German Flats and occupy Fort Schuyler [Stanwix], which they did on the 17th. Because not all the barracks had been completed, a part of Elmore's command returned to German Flats to winter there at nearby Burnet's Field.<sup>21</sup> At the end of December, beef and an eight-month supply of flour, along with soap and candles, were ordered and sent to Elmore's men at Fort Stanwix.<sup>22</sup>

One of the last actions taken by the Continental Congress in 1776 was the passage of a resolution on Saturday, December 28, providing:

That Fort Stanwix be strengthened, & other fortifications be made at proper places near the Mohawk river, ... to be executed this winter, commanding officers of artillery, chief engineer, quartermaster general, & commissary general, provide & perform whatever things in the respective departments are necessary, or may contribute to the accomplishment thereof.<sup>23</sup>

The winter of 1776-77 was a period of quiet on the northern frontier, but it was not one of complacency. Sir Guy Carleton's aborted 1776 invasion confirmed American fears that the British intended carrying the war into the interior; and although Sir Guy had withdrawn to Canada, there was ample evidence that the project was deferred not abandoned. Shortages of every form of material hounded the commanders in the Northern Department. Illness and desertion ate into the effective manpower. Sectional and personal loyalties divided men and units, a condition that was reflected in the shifts of command between Philip Schuyler and Horatio Gates. Crown Point and Ticonderoga at the northern terminus of the Champlain-Hudson line were still American, but every problem that plagued the Americans seemed to focus and compound there. Fort Stanwix was unfinished and while defensible against small arms and light artillery, it was vulnerable to a determined attack supported by heavier field pieces.

During the late winter, a new and little-known figure entered the story of the fort. A French officer, Captain B. de Lamarquise, who had been assigned to the Northern Department as an engineer, submitted to General Schuyler a plan for rebuilding the fort. The general accepted it and ordered the engineer to:

make the alterations agreeable to the plan you have laid before me, and to guard as much as possible against any misfortunes, that might be occasioned by an

attack before the alterations are compleat, whilst the other is going on as possible that the garrison may be covered. Perhaps it will be best to begin with one bastion and the adjacent curtains and compleat as much as possible before another is begun.<sup>24</sup>

Lamarquise's plan has not been located, and thus an important element of the construction history of the fort is missing. That it envisaged substantial changes as indicated in the general's letter to Colonel Elmore in which he wrote: "Captain Marquizes [?] has in charge from the general to New Moddle [model] Fort Schuyler and make some additional fortifications at that place."<sup>25</sup>

At the end of March, while preparing to leave for Philadelphia, General Schuyler ordered Col. Peter Gansevoort of the 3d New York Regiment of the Continental Line to Fort Stanwix to replace Elmore's men of the Connecticut Line.<sup>26</sup> The first detachment of the new garrison reached the fort on April 17. On May 3 Colonel Gansevoort arrived and took command. A week later, Elmore's men, who had spent the winter on the frontier, marched out of the fort on their way to Albany. The remainder of Gansevoort's regiment under the command of Lt. Col. Marinus Willett arrived on May 28.<sup>27</sup>

Gates replaced Schuyler as Commanding General of the Northern Department. In his papers is an undated report from Captain de Lamarquise, written prior to Gansevoort's arrival, detailing the latter's work at the fort:

Capt. De Lamarquise's proceedings at Fort Schuyler since his arrival at that post-  
has made halves to the axes pickaxes & spades & other implements  
has made 200 embares on riviere  
has made a guard house at the entry of the Fort which before his arrival was  
behind  
has made sentry-boxes where necessary to keep centinels  
has built a house by order of the general for one stefanny who is married to a  
squaw, 24 ft long by 12 ft deep  
has made a small store to put provisions under cover finished a house for the  
savages when they come to that post also arranged the Barracks which were of no  
service not being in a state without alteration to receive 200 men and he will put  
them in a state to receive 500 or at least 400 say.

The Garrison has not yet permitted him to undertake the putting the fort in proper  
order and were there men sufficient, the grass will not be of sufficient strength for  
15 days, to cut turf he has therefore employed the few he has to open a road to the  
westward of the fort where he can get cedar and pine near at hand, whereas before  
they were obliged to go three miles to fetch a piece of wood as also firewood.

as soon as Colo Gansevoort arrives he will set about the fort and trim it up with  
turf &c from the bottom of the ditch &c.

He proposes to raise the parapet with cedar (as there is enough about a mile from  
the fort) by the end of next month he thinks it will be necessary to order 200 to  
300 militia to assist in that work if no other troops are to be sent but Gansevoort's.

He proposes next week to make a hospital for the sick for the want of which and a surgeon he will be obliged to send them down having already done it Major Cockran is now very ill.

When he arrived at Fort Schuyler the 20th of April with a company of 20 carpenters a few days after he was obliged to discharge 10 of them being shoemakers, tailors, & smiths who did not understand their business for which they engaged.<sup>28</sup>

Within three weeks, the engineer wrote General Gates proposing to build a new fort rather than repairing the existing one, saying:

I have received orders from General Schuyler to repair this fort in the same form it was last war. It is absolutely necessary that I make it entirely new Barracks, Ramparts, Parapet, Fosse and covered way Fraise and Cheveaux de friese; all is destroyed. If there is no more troops to come than Col. Gansevoort's Regiment, I can not absolutely repair this Fort so soon as I would wish it and necessity requires. I wish you would send a reinforcement as soon as it is possible and give orders to the Quarter Master General to supply the necessities of the Garrison, by means of which I can in a little time put the place in condition not to fear the enemy.<sup>29</sup>

Almost simultaneously, Gansevoort assured the departmental commander that he would cooperate with the engineer to the full extent of his capabilities, but that he simply did not have the personnel to do everything that was needed, "as the whole fort and barracks is to be new modelled." He also informed him that he needed at least ten more bateaux to transport boards.<sup>30</sup>

Before Gates could respond to Gansevoort's and Lamarquise's correspondence, Congress again shifted the Northern Department's command to Schuyler.<sup>31</sup> At this point, the construction history of the fort becomes more confusing. The engineer had insisted that the old fort was beyond repair and that a new one would have to be built, and Gansevoort's memorandum to Gates indicated that the works were to be "new modelled." On May 26 Lt. Col. Marinus Willett arrived from Fort Constitution with the rest of Gansevoort's regiment, minus a detachment left at Fort Dayton.<sup>32</sup> Colonel Willett published an account of his military career thirty years after the siege of Fort Stanwix, and that narrative makes the following contribution to the story of the fort's remodeling:

Instead of repairing the works after the manner of their original construction, which could easily have been done, — for though in a state of decay, the principal outlines of the old fort were sufficiently visible, — the engineer sent out large parties to procure logs from the swamp. Having ordered them to be drawn near the fort, he began to erect them in the covert way and not in the center of the ditch where they formerly had been placed. After having with much labor procured the logs, it appeared that each being seventeen feet in length, when the pickets that were to be made of them only required ten feet. This blunder of the engineer, together with the remissness he showed, at so critical a moment, led Colonel Willett to suggest to Colonel Gansevoort the propriety of discharging him from the office he filled. Colonel Gansevoort, however, from the circumstance that the engineer had been appointed by the commander-in-chief of the Northern

Department, General Schuyler to superintend the fortifications, was reluctant to take the step.

The fortifications, consequently, continued to go on under the superintendence of the engineer. The barracks were repaired within the fort, and a large and commodious building intended for this purpose was erected a little beyond the foot of the glacis. But all of those works were of secondary importance; indeed the barracks out of the fort at the foot of the glacis could be of no use in case of investment, but rather an injury. And so it actually proved: for the enemy set fire to this very building at a time, when the wind blowing fresh toward the fort, occasioned considerable inconvenience to the garrison. In the meantime little was done to strengthen the fort, though there was every reason to expect the instant arrival of the enemy.

The anxiety of Colonel Willett, arising from a conviction of the incompetency of the engineer, in connection with the critical state of the fort, led him closely to inspect the progress of the state of the fortification. The engineer had begun to erect a salient angle to the gate, with two embrasures in it. He was also engaged in erecting pickets along the covert way. The pickets were placed about three feet from the parapet of the glacis. Two of them were framed together with cross-pieces, and formed a kind of porthole which were intended to be placed opposite the embrasures. But it soon appeared from the manner in which the pickets were arranged that the portholes formed of the pickets with crosspieces would come opposite the neck of the embrasures. By this means the salient angle would be rendered wholly useless. Colonel Willett at an early stage of the work, noticed the error, but thought it best to let the engineer take his own course until the line of pickets should be carried to that part of the salient angle where they would be opposite to the embrasures. When the engineer reached this part of his work, his ignorance would be without the least covering; and yet he never discovered his error until the pickets were erected opposite the neck of the embrasures. Then for the first time he saw that all his labor in erecting the salient angle had been in vain; and that it could not be used without first knocking away the neck of the embrasures. The case being stated to Colonel Gansevoort, he directed Colonel Willett to arrest the engineer, which was accordingly done. He was permitted to repair to headquarters; a letter at the same time being sent to General Schuyler assigning the reasons of the arrest.

It was not until some time in the month [July] that this step was taken. Information had already been received that the enemy were advancing toward the garrison.<sup>33</sup>

Because he wrote his account so many years after the events occurred, the colonel's story must be used cautiously and in conjunction with other, more contemporaneous sources. Returning to those sources, one can trace a part of the course of rebuilding of the fort. On June 15, in reply to a query of Schuyler's concerning the progress of the work, Gansevoort wrote that, in spite of the fact every available man was on fatigue details, progress was very slow and that:

...there are about 2,000 Pickquettes lying around the fort which we have Drawn out of the swamp through which we have been obliged to make Roads for that

purpose and will soon be able to compleat that part of the business — nothing of any importance is yet done towards the strengthening of the fortification which at present has little more than the name of a fortification. The engineer at this place has just laid the foundation of a salient angle before the gate and the carpenters are employed in framing a Barracks to be raised just before the glacis opposite the south Bastion the Barracks at present being bad and the whole works insufficient to contain the few men we have here, the whole of the works which appear to me to be necessary and which Capt. Marquisie tells me are to be done at this place undoubtedly require more strength than we have at present. I, therefore, humbly request that part of my Regiment which is at present stationed at Fort Dayton may be relieved and ordered to this place.

He reported that the engineer appeared to be diligent, that many of the supplies went to "victualing" the Indians, that a number of his men were ill and that he had to send as far as Conajohary for boards and to Little Falls for lime.<sup>34</sup>

Suddenly, on July 10, General Schuyler wrote to Gansevoort directing him to "send Capt. Marquisie down & let Major Hubbel superintend the works."<sup>35</sup> Nothing in the contemporary correspondence reveals the reasons for this apparently abrupt action. Schuyler was not a man who gave his confidence lightly and he was equally slow to withdraw it. The reasons for ordering the Frenchman's replacement must have been weighty. Looking at it from the distance of nearly two centuries, some of Lamarquise's acts, decisions, and statements certainly are hard to understand and defend. For one thing, he intruded himself into the field of Indian relations, as witness this report to General Gates:

I have the honor to write you this to inform you of the aggrements which I have made with the savages of the Six Nations, that after having held council with them of which Mr. Stephnes was the interpreter, they promised me neutrality, and that they will not medle any more with the affairs of the King of England, and they are satisfied that the King of France was a friend of the Americans for which they will rest at peace.

The 26th of April last the savages of the Six Nations sent to the Fort for me, in consequence of which I was sent with them in Council with the savages that was arrived from Canada. These savages from Canada promised me also neutrality in the presence of Mr. Dean, the Interpreter, and told me that they will refuse General Carleton all sorts of propositions, and that they will not medle more with anything, and they gave the following news:

At a place called La Gallette (Oswaygatia I believe) [Oswego] where they are constructing a vessel of 28 pieces of cannon which ought to be finished. There is in the Fort 50 or 60 men, and 6 pieces of artillery mounted. At Niagara there is about 200 men which Mr. Johnson's son [Sir John Johnson] left when he was last fall at New York. At St. John's last winter they had there and at the Isle aux Nois 1,000 men, and there they are constructing 12 bateaux of one mast, and several more large batteaus. When Messrs. Nermonet and the other gentlemen arrived, I had arrargned [arranged] all this on my good will and money, about a fortnight; being glad to have the occasion to oblige the country and render myself useful to the Continent.

I hope General this will give you pleasure, and that you will have some regard to my good intention; it has cost in presents to make them drink about one hundred dollars which I expended with a good heart.

...I shall always be ready to execute your orders, and that will give much pleasure to the savages.<sup>36</sup>

In his undated memorandum describing the situation prior to May 5, the date of Gansevoort's arrival, he wrote concerning the conference with the Indians:

The 26 April 2 savages from the Sault St. Louis near Montreal arrived among the 6 Nations. As soon as they heard there was a French officer at the fort they sent for him to hold a council which lasted from 9 in the morning to 6 in the evening but not being accustomed to such councils he neglected to lay in a good breakfast. Therefore declares when he broke up had great occasion for a good dinner. In the counsel the savages from Canada agreed with the Six Nations and him not to take part with the English as they call our enemies but remain neutral.

When he went out to meet them they received him with the honors of war a salute of 3 cannons and each savage fired his fusil, which I answered with 3 discharges from the detachment I had with me. When I left them the same ceremony happened. They made him a present, but unfortunately not worth much. He did all he could to engage the Canadian Indians to come down but could not succeed . . . P.S. — If you send Capt. Florimant here I believe it will be of intended service first to assist in the works, secondly the right of another French officer will confirm to the savages what I have already told them — and also you may be assured he is an honest man.<sup>37</sup>

Lamarquise's reports pose some problems. First, Colonel Elmore, the fort's commanding officer and the official responsible for Indian affairs in that vicinity, and his successor, Colonel Gansevoort, never referred to the council, nor did General Schuyler, departmental commander and Indian commissioner. This is strange, if so important a conference as the engineer describes convened. Secondly, the only members of the Six Nations whose presence in any numbers is reported at or near the fort and with whom the Americans apparently had friendly contacts were the Oneidas. Thirdly, the conduct, of the Six Nations, excepting the Oneidas, was exactly the opposite of what Lamarquise reported they had pledged. If the council took place, it probably included not representatives of the Confederacy, but only a few of the local bands; and the Indians succeeded in hoodwinking the Frenchman, playing upon his sense of importance. There are no documents authorizing the engineer to treat with the Indians and none that have been studied support his story; although a probable result was Schuyler's order to Gansevoort forbidding persons not employed by the Indian Department to make speeches to the Indians.<sup>38</sup>

Lamarquise's professional performance is not easy to defend. As has been noted, he was commissioned to restore the fort "in the same way it was last war." Contending that it was beyond repair, he advised building a completely new one and apparently proceeded to act as though that was what he was doing. This would have been a very ambitious undertaking under the best of conditions, and one that would have demanded a severely imposed husbanding of men, time, and equipment. However, he built a house for Stephen Degran, a local French

squaw-man, a building to shelter the Indians who visited the fort, and erected a large new barracks outside the fort that had to be destroyed during the siege to prevent its screening the enemy's approach. His utilization of building materials was not what would have been expected of an engineer working against time in a wilderness environment. Instead of erecting log barracks, he used boards that had to be shipped by bateaux from Conajohary, a distance of almost fifty miles. In fact, if he was building a new fort to replace the old one, he failed. Nothing in the contemporary documents indicates that he razed the old ramparts; and as shall be noted, the evidence indicates that the old fort was still standing in August. Perhaps he intended to build a new one and that time, the approaching enemy, and his recall precluded his accomplishing his objective. The Gansevoort-Schuyler correspondence does not tell why he was replaced — perhaps Colonel Willett's account of Lamarquise's incompetence provides the answer.

The Americans continued working to strengthen their position under Hubbell's supervision. As the summer advanced, enemy activity in the vicinity increased. On June 25 a party of Indians attacked Captain Gregg and Corporal Madison while they were hunting. The corporal was killed and the captain almost fatally wounded.<sup>39</sup> On July 3, Ensign John Spoor and a party of seven men cutting sod at the site of the ruins of Fort Newport were attacked. One soldier was killed and scalped, one wounded and scalped, and the officer and four men were captured.<sup>40</sup> Not unnaturally, the fort's commander suspected the neighboring Oneidas of having a share in these events; and, according to William L. Stone, Sr., the Indians denied any complicity, protesting their good-will and friendship, to which the Colonel replied:

Brother Warriors of the Six Nations: I thank you for your good talk.

Brothers: You tell us you are sorry for the cruel usage of Captain Gregg, and the murder of one of our warriors; that you would have immediately pursued the murderers, had not General Schuyler, General Gates, and the French general desired you not to take any part in this war; and that you have obeyed their orders, and are resolved to do so. I commend your good resolution.

Brothers: You say you have sent a runner to the Six Nations to inform them of what has happened, and that you expect some of the chiefs will look into the affair, and try to find the murderers. You have done well. I shall be glad to smoke a pipe with your chiefs, and hope they will do as they speak.

Brothers: I hope the mischief has been done, not by any of our good neighbors of the Oneida nation but by the Tories, who are enemies to you as well as to us, and who are ready to murder yourselves, your wives, and children if you will not be as wicked as themselves.

Brothers: When your chiefs shall convince me that Indians of the six Nations have had no hand in this wicked thing, and shall use means to find out the murderers and bring them to justice, you may be assured that we will strengthen the chain of friendship, and embrace you as good brothers. I will not suffer any of our warriors to hurt you.<sup>41</sup>

The details of the work done after Lamarquise's departure cannot be traced in the correspondence that has survived. Thus a picture of what the fort looked like when Brigadier Barry St. Leger's men laid siege to it in August must be inferred from the data that we have reviewed and from two cartographic sources.

Captain Lamarquise had reported to General Gates that the original fort was beyond repair and that a new one would have to be built, and Colonel Gansevoort apparently acquiesced in this. Therefore, one question that needs answering is whether a new fort was indeed constructed. The engineer's and Gansevoort's letters to Schuyler and Willett's *Narrative* gives the impression that was the objective of the work undertaken during the summer of 1777; but the same sources raise doubts that much progress was made toward that goal.

The reports and letters, and especially Willett's account, clearly indicate that the original ditch and glacis were retained. This meant that before a new fort could be constructed the old one would have to be razed, but there is no documentary evidence that this was done. In fact, the ramparts received scant attention. The engineer reported to Gates before May 5 that he intended to raise the parapet with cedar. He mentioned the laying of turf on the ramparts' exterior slopes, and beginning work on a "salient angle" in front of the main gate. Colonel Willett recalled that "little was done to strengthen the fort," and Colonel Gansevoort reported on June 15 that "nothing of any importance is yet done towards strengthening the fortification..."

The cartographic evidence argues strongly against the construction of a new fort. The most nearly contemporary plan or map was the one made by the French officer, Francois de Fleury, entitled, "A Sketch of the siege of FORT SCHUYLER Presented to Col. Gansevoort by L. Fleury." The original Map is lost, but two copies exist. One by G. H. Bowen is preserved in the Cornell University Library's Sparks Collection. Another was prepared by William Campbell for William L. Stone's *Life of Brant*. A later sketch of the fort was drawn by an unknown artist and presented to Colonel Gansevoort, in whose Albany home it hung for many years. It is now owned by the New York Public Library.<sup>42</sup> This presents a view of the fort and its environs after the siege, possibly in 1778. These representations of the Revolutionary fort's curtains, bastions, glacis, and gates correspond closely with the earlier plans, especially numbers CXXI 99, 100, and 101 of the British Museum's Crown Map Collection. (Maps are after the Appendix of this book.)

From the correspondence of 1777 and the Fleury map, a general description of the historic fort as it existed at the time of the siege may be projected. The ditch and glacis conformed to the pre-Revolutionary design, i.e., a ditch that was about forty-feet wide and a glacis approximately ninety-feet wide. However, Willett said that instead of being in the center of the ditch, the pickets were placed in the covered way, the space between the outside berm of the ditch and the glacis parapet. The pickets, according to Willett, were ten-feet long of which approximately six or seven feet stood above ground. An unfinished salient angle stood opposite the main gate, which was located in the center of the south curtain. A drawbridge gave access to the gate. In the center of the east curtain was another gate, or sally-port, that gave access to a spring-fed stream. A small salient covered this entrance after 1764, and an unidentifiable symbol indicates that some type of work did so in 1777. A fraise of horizontal inclined pickets was near the top of the external slope of the ramparts. All reports agreed that a very limited amount of work was done on the ramparts, except for placing sod on the exterior slope and raising the parapet with cedar. The map's representation of the ramparts shows a heavy line for all sections except the south curtain and southeast bastion. This may indicate that the latter were in a less advanced state of repair. The flagstaff was on the southwest bastion, where three cannon were mounted. Four guns were on the northwest bastion, three on the northeast, and four on the southeast. The bombproof was in the southeast bastion. The sources do not indicate whether the parapet was *en barbette* or had embrasures, although the post-siege plan shows embrasures. There is a tradition that because of the topography, the eastern curtain was shorter than the others; and this seems logical because a small stream flowed within a few yards of the fort on that side, and

its west bank would appear to have required a weaker and shorter curtain. This is supported by St. Leger's description of the fort:

I found it a respectable Fortress strongly garrisoned with 700 men and demanding a train of Artillery we were not masters of for its speedy subjection. — Its form is a kind of Trapezium or four sided figure with four Bastions freized and picketed, without them is a good ditch with pickets nipping out a considerable way at the salient angles of the Bastions three nines four sixes two threes with a considerable number of wall pieces were all the Artillery the Enemy made use of during the Siege.<sup>43</sup>

The structures inside the fort are not easily identified. The key to the map uses letters to accomplish this, but they are not always distinct. In one instance, the guardhouse, no reference is found in the key. This building stood to the left of the main gate as one entered the fort. Opposite, it was the storehouse. The barracks stood east and west of the parade, and the commandant's quarters and headquarters stood north of it. The key also lists a "Laboratory," whose location may have been identical with the storehouse or commissary. While the conclusions developed from the documentary and cartographic sources are tentative, archeological investigations have provided increased knowledge of the forts physical features.<sup>44</sup>

After the siege, repair and construction continued, because the threat to the frontier remained critical. The post-siege map shows a hospital, carpenter shop, blacksmith shop, "Indian House," and stable outside the fort's walls and a "Necessary House" built over the creek and connected to the southeast bastion by a bridge in the position that a similar facility occupied in 1759, as depicted on Crown Map CXXI, 99.

### Endnotes:

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Papers of the Continental Congress, National Archives, ltr., Schuyler to President of Congress, June 8, 1776.
  - <sup>2</sup> Schuyler Papers, New York Public Library, ltr., Schuyler to Washington, June 11, 1776.
  - <sup>3</sup> Worthington C. Ford, et. al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress* (33 vols., Washington, 1904-36), V, 442.
  - <sup>4</sup> Schuyler Papers, ltrs, Washington to Schuyler, June 16 and June 26, 1776.
  - <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Schuyler to Dayton, June 27, 1776; ltr., Schuyler to Washington, July 2, 1776.
  - <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Letters and Orders, Albany, June 26, 1776 ltr., Schuyler to Washington, July 1, 1776.
  - <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Schuyler to Washington, July 17, 1776.
  - <sup>8</sup> O'Callaghan, *Documents*, VIII, 451.
  - <sup>9</sup> Schuyler Papers, Letters and Orders, Schuyler to Dayton, July 16, 1776.
  - <sup>10</sup> Francois de Fleury, "A Sketch of the siege of FORT SCHUYLER," copied by G. H. Bowen, Sparks Collection, Cornell University Library. Appendix XIII.
  - <sup>11</sup> Schuyler Papers, ltr., Hubbell to Schuyler, July 25, 1776.
  - <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Schuyler to Washington, August 1, 1776. Italics the writer's.
  - <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Dayton to Schuyler, August 1, 1776.
  - <sup>14</sup> Gates Papers, New York Public Library, ltr., Schuyler to Gates, August 3, 1776.
  - <sup>15</sup> Schuyler Papers, ltr., Dayton to Schuyler, August 30, 1776.
  - <sup>16</sup> Schuyler Papers, ltrs., Dayton to Schuyler, July 8, 1776; August 1, 1776; Sept. 1, 1776; Schuyler to Dayton, August 2, 1776; Ebenezer Elmer, *Journal*, New Jersey Historical Society, August 26-September 5, 1776.
  - <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Dayton to Schuyler, September 14, 1776.
  - <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Dayton to Schuyler, September 17, 1776.
  - <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, ltrs., Henry Glen to Schuyler, July 8, 1776; Schuyler to Washington, Aug. 1, 1776; Glen to Schuyler, September 25, 1776.
  - <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Dayton to Schuyler, October 5, 1776.
  - <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Letters and Orders, Schuyler to Elmore, October 9 and November 12, 1776; Ebermeezer Elmer, *Journal*, New Jersey Historical Society, October 17, 1776.

- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., to Henry Glen, ADQM Genl., Dec. 21, 1776.
- <sup>23</sup> Journals of the Continental Congress, VI, 1049.
- <sup>24</sup> Schuyler Papers, ltr., de Lamarquise to Schuyler, March 18, 1777.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., Letters and Orders, To Elmore, March 18, 1777.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., To Col. Van Schaick, March 25, 1777.
- <sup>27</sup> William Colbrath, Journal of the most material occurrences preceding the Siege of Fort Schuyler (formerly Fort Stanwix) with an account of that siege, etc., negative photostat, New York Public Library.
- <sup>28</sup> Gates Papers., memo, Lamarquise to Gates, n.d.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., ltr., Lamarquise to Gates, May 19, 1777.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., ltr., Gansevoort to Gates, n.d.
- <sup>31</sup> *Journal of the Continental Congress*, May 22, 1777.
- <sup>32</sup> Marinus Willett's Orderly Book; Colbrath's Journal May 28, 1777.
- <sup>33</sup> Marinus Willett, Narrative.
- <sup>34</sup> Schuyler Papers, ltrs., Schuyler to Gansevoort, June 9; Gansevoort to Schuyler, June 15.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., Schuyler to Gansevoort, July 10, 1777.
- <sup>36</sup> Gates Papers, ltr., Lamarquise to Gates, May 17, 1777.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid., memorandum, Lamarquise to Gates, n.d.
- <sup>38</sup> Schuyler Papers, Letters and Orders, to Gansevoort, June 8, 1777.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., ltrs., Gansevoort to Schuyler, June 26, 1777; Colbrath Journal.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> William L. Stone, *Life of Brant* (2 vols, New York, 1838) II, 227-8.
- <sup>42</sup> Francois de Fleury, "A Sketch of the siege of FORT SCHUYLER," copied by G.H. Bowen, Sparks Collection, Cornell University Library; "Fleury's Map." Appendix VIII; Peter J. Guthorn, *American Maps and Map Markers of the Revolution* (Monmouth Beach, NJ., 1966), 22; Gansevoort Map of Fort Stanwix, New York Public Library, Appendix IX.
- <sup>43</sup> Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Transcripts of Colonial Records, Hr., St. Leger to Carleton, August 27, 1777.
- <sup>44</sup> Plan Showing the Putative Layout of Fort Stanwix in August 1777, Appendix X.

## Fort Stanwix in the Revolution Siege

While the men of Colonel Gansevoort's command were repairing Fort Stanwix, the British government and two of its generals were preparing plans for a campaign that was to test the fort and its defenders. What they planned was an invasion of the northern frontier that would, among other accomplishments, redeem the aborted one of 1776. To understand that plan and what it did and did not contain, we need to go back to November of that year when William Howe proposed a plan for 1777 providing that 2,000 men would hold Rhode Island while 10,000 would move from there against New England and 5,000 would hold New York City and 8,000 would "cover New Jersey," while 10,000 would advance up the Hudson to cooperate with a renewed invasion from Canada. The 8,000 men covering New Jersey would also threaten Philadelphia, which Sir William intended to attack after being reinforced. If the American Capital fell and troops became available, he planned to attack Virginia during the autumn and South Carolina and Georgia in the winter. This plan was predicated upon his having available a total of 35,000 men, requiring a reinforcement of 15,000.<sup>1</sup>

On December 20, before a response to his initial plan could be received from London, the general wrote to Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for Colonies and Lord Commissioner of Trade and Plantations, outlining a modification of his plan. This proposed opening the campaign with an offensive against Pennsylvania, where he believed the sentiments of the people were favorable to the British, and deferring "the offensive Plan towards Boston until the Reinforcement arrives, that there might be a corps to act defensively on the lower part of Hudson's River to cover Jersey and to facilitate in some degree the approach of the Canada Army." He changed the proposed distribution of troops to 2,000 for Rhode Island, 4,000 in the New York City area, 3,000 to act on the lower Hudson, and 10,000 to operate in Pennsylvania, a total of 19,000.<sup>2</sup>

At the close of the northern campaign of 1776, one of Gen. Sir Guy Carleton's subordinates, Maj. Gen. John Burgoyne, like other officers who were members of Parliament, returned to England for the winter sessions and to advance personal professional interests. He arrived at an important point in the development of plans for the coming year. Between the colonial minister and Sir Guy, there was an old and cherished enmity. The general's failure to prosecute the invasion of the northern frontier was grist in Lord George's mill, and even George III agreed that the command of the next campaign should be given to a more aggressive general.<sup>3</sup>

There were two candidates for the honor: Henry Clinton and Burgoyne. Clinton did not seek the assignment, at least in part because he expected Howe to give it to him when the invading force established contact with New York.<sup>4</sup> Burgoyne was the more obvious choice, in spite of his association with the failed invasion. In fact, he turned that association to an advantage. Not only could he pose as being familiar with the American scene, but he also assiduously cultivated the impression that he had opposed the abandonment of Crown Point; and a precis in the American Department's papers shows that the account he gave of the campaign of the previous summer did not always place Carleton in the most favorable light. He had brought a letter from his commander recommending him to the secretary as a source of information and advice, and he took advantage of this, especially in detailed observations on Sir Guy's requirements for the

next campaign.<sup>5</sup> He used a technique of moderate criticism and suggestive contrast to convey an impression of Carleton's inadequacy.

On New Year's Day Burgoyne wrote to Lord Germain telling him that he was leaving London for Bath:

My physician has pressed me to go to Bath for a short time, and I find it requisite to my health and spirits to follow his Advice. But I think it a previous duty to assure your Lordship that should my attendance in town become necessary, relative to information upon the affairs in Canada, I shall be ready to obey your summons upon one day's notice.

Your Lordship being out of town, I submitted the above intentions a few days ago personally to his Majesty in his closet, and I added, "that as the arrangements for the next campaign might possibly come under his royal contemplation before my return, I humbly laid myself at his Majesty's feet for such active employment as he might think me worthy of.

This was the substance of my audience of my part, I undertook it, and I now report it, to you Lordship, in the hope of your patronage in the pursuit, a hope My Lord, founded not only upon a just sense of the honor your Lordship's friendship must reflect upon me but also upon a feeling that I deserve it, inasmuch as a solid respect and sincere personal attachment can constitute such a claim.<sup>6</sup>

Burgoyne was clearly soliciting the command of the army that would invade the colonies' northern frontier.

As late as February 24, 1777, the day after the receipt of Howe's December 20 modification of plans for 1777, the king wrote to Lord North, Prime Minister that Germain was going to propose that the northern command be given to Sir Henry Clinton and that Burgoyne be sent to New York. However, on the following day, the Cabinet agreed to send Burgoyne back to Canada.<sup>7</sup> Germain had made certain that Carleton would not conduct the campaign, and he flattered himself that, although he had failed in an attempt to effect the governor-general's recall, the invasion would be directed by a general who possessed the qualities the secretary found so lacking in Sir Guy.

Leaving Carleton in command in Canada and appointing Burgoyne to command the expedition created a strange and potentially dangerous situation of dual command with "Burgoyne dependent on Carleton for his base and transport, yet marching independently to place himself under the orders of another General [Howe], while Carleton disowned all responsibility for events beyond the frontier of Canada."<sup>8</sup>

General Burgoyne had not been idle while his professional future was being settled: he was busy preparing his own plan. On February 28 he sent to Germain his "Thoughts for Conducting the War from the Side of Canada."<sup>9</sup>

In examining Burgoyne's plan, two matters are pertinent to this study: the basic purpose or objective of the invasion and how it involved the Mohawk Valley. A great deal of ink has been expended in identifying the first. The isolation of New England through a junction of three forces, Burgoyne's from Canada, Sir William Howe's from New York, and Brigadier Barry St. Leger's

from Oswego at Albany was a time-honored, simplistic definition. Recent scholarship has made the story more complex and in so doing has redefined the strategic role that the campaign was intended to play. The heart of the solution of the problem lies in Burgoyne's plan.

That plan was, in the first place, a discussion of alternatives. After retaking the first British objectives, Crown Point and Fort Ticonderoga, "The next measure must depend upon those taken by the enemy, and *upon the general plan concerted at home.*"<sup>10</sup> If the Government's plan provided that Sir William Howe's entire army would act on the Hudson and if "the only object of the Canada army is to effect a junction with that force," Burgoyne recommended that the main invading column go to Albany by way of Lake George. If, as he believed probable, the Americans should "be in force on the lake," light infantry and Indians should act around the lake to "oblige them to quit it without waiting for naval operations." If that failed to clear the lake, the army should attempt to move southward by Lake Champlain's South Bay and Skenesborough [Whitehall, N. Y]. Burgoyne expected this alternative to be very difficult and at best requiring a significant number of vehicles for his artillery and supplies. The vehicles had to come from Canada. If, at the same time, the Americans should continue to occupy Lake George, the British would have to leave a chain of posts as they moved southward to secure their communications. While Burgoyne expected that the British would be able to rid Lake George of the Americans, he advocated that the army "at the outset should be provided with carriages, implements, and artificers for conveying armed vessels from Ticonderoga to the lake."

His second alternative was based upon cooperation with the British force posted in Rhode Island by getting control of the Connecticut River. Such an expedition would face serious transport, communication, and security problems, but "Should the junction between Canada and Rhode Island armies be effected upon the Connecticut, it would not be too sanguine an expectation that all the New England provinces will be reduced by their operations."

The third alternative that Burgoyne suggested was that if the force available for service were too small to undertake an over-land expedition with a reasonable promise of success, it might be wise to send the army by sea to join Sir William Howe.

If the first alternative, the one Burgoyne preferred, were chosen, he defined the expedition's mission in these words: "These ideas are formed upon the supposition, that the sole purpose of the Canada army is to effect a junction with General Howe, or after cooperating so far as to get possession of Albany and open the communication to New York, to remain upon Hudson's River, and thereby enable that General to act with his whole force to the Southward." If the second alternative, providing for gaining control of the Connecticut River and cooperation with the troops in Rhode Island, were selected, the reduction of New England, which Britain saw as the heart of the rebellion, would certainly facilitate Howe's movements in other quarters. The third alternative, involving the transfer of the northern army by sea, would obviously be exclusively directed toward Howe's reinforcement. Nothing in Burgoyne's plan made holding the Champlain-Hudson line and isolating New England his mission, except in so far as "cooperating to get possession of Albany and open the communication to New York, to remain upon Hudson's River, and thereby enable that General [Howe] to act with his whole force to the Southward" would contribute to attaining that end.

Burgoyne's proposals received careful attention; and when the King responded to them, he and his ministers had not only the general's comments but also Howe's letter of November 30 containing his first plan, the one of December 20 altering that plan by shifting the offensive from New England to Philadelphia, one dated December 30 and that reported the affair at Trenton, and one dated January 20. When Sir William wrote the last, his fragile optimism had evaporated

in the face of the battles of Trenton and Princeton and the amazing recuperative power displayed by Washington's army, and he wrote: "I do not now see a prospect of terminating ye War but by a general Action, and I am aware of the difficulties in our way to obtain it, as ye Enemy move with so much more celerity than we possibly can with our foreign troops who are too much attach'd to their baggage, which they have in amazing quantities in ye field." <sup>11</sup>

With all these documents before them, the King's advisors, members of the cabinet, and George III made the choice from among Burgoyne's proposals. The King's decision is contained in a document entitled "Remarks on 'The Conduct of the War from Canada'," containing the royal objections to the second and third alternatives, ending with this paragraph:

The idea of carrying the army by sea to Sir William Howe would certainly require the leaving a much larger part of it in Canada, as in that case the rebel army would divide that province from the immense one under Sir W. Howe. *I greatly dislike the idea.* <sup>12</sup>

The decision was made by the ministry and Crown. The primary purpose of the invasion would be to bring a two-column army from Canada to Albany, where it would be at Gen. Sir William Howe's command to utilize in prosecuting the war. If in accomplishing this other benefits should accrue, such as the isolation of New England, destruction of the army of the Northern Department, and conquest of a geographic area, that would be so much the better. Perhaps in the face of such a disaster, the rebellion would collapse.

The second matter, and the one more directly associated with Fort Stanwix, concerns the part the Mohawk Valley was destined to play in Burgoyne's strategy. He covered that subject in his "Thoughts" with these paragraphs:

To avoid breaking in upon other matter, I omitted in the beginning of these papers to state the idea of an expedition at the outset of the campaign by the Lake Ontario and Oswego to the Mohawk River, which as a *diversion to facilitate every proposed* operation, would be highly desirable, provided the army should be reinforced sufficiently to afford it.

It may at first appear, from a view of the present strength of the army, that it may bear the sort of detachment proposed by myself last year for this purpose; but it is to be considered that at that time the utmost object of the campaign from the advanced season and unavoidable delay of preparation for the lakes, being the reduction of Crown Point and Ticonderoga, unless the success of my expedition had opened the road to Albany, no greater numbers were necessary than for those first operations. The case in the present year differs; because the season of the year affording a prospect of very extensive operation, and consequently the establishment of many posts, patrols, etc., will become necessary. The army ought to be in a state of numbers to bear those drains, and still remain sufficient to attack anything that probably can be opposed to it.

Nor, to argue from probability, is so much force necessary for this diversion this year, as was required for the last; because we then knew that General Schuyler with a thousand men, was fortified upon the Mohawk. When the different situations of things are considered, viz, the progress of General Howe, the early

invasion from Canada, the threatening of the Connecticut from Rhode Island, etc., it is not to be imagined that any detachment of such force as that of Schuyler can be supplied by the enemy for the Mohawk. I would not therefore propose it of more (and I have great diffidence whether so much can be prudently afforded) than Sir John Johnson's corps, and a hundred British from the second brigade, and a hundred more from the 8th regiment, with four pieces of the lightest artillery, and a body of savages; Sir John Johnson to be with a detachment in person, and an able field officer to command it. I should wish Lieutenant-Colonel St. Leger for that employment.

I particularize the second brigade, because the first is proposed to be deminished by the 31st regiment remaining in Canada, and the rest of the regiment drafted for the expedition being made also part of the Canada force, the two brigades will be exactly squared.<sup>13</sup>

Burgoyne's discussion is a strange combination of proposing a diversion by way of the Mohawk and a questioning of its feasibility. But, again, it is wise to remember that he was writing about alternatives. From a purely military perspective, there was really not too much to commend the Mohawk expedition. True, it would be diversionary, but did it promise to be effective enough to justify the commitment of the white troops that would be required, especially when so few could be spared? The government's decision to operate in western New York was based upon political rather than military considerations operating in the valley and farther west.

To Britain and her northern colonies, the region was the gateway to the western country whose importance had long been appreciated at Whitehall. Memories of Pontiac's conspiracy were fresh, and prudence dictated that the western tribes become accustomed to supporting British interests in the interior. More immediately important was the retention of the loyalty of the Six Nations. Two of the tribes were refusing to support their old allies, the British; and one, the Oneidas, was actively assisting the Colonies. The presence of victorious royal troops would insure the steadfastness of the loyal and recall the allegiance of the alienated. The local Loyalists were another factor-not only the active ones like the Johnsons and their associates, but also the inactive and wavering. The former had suffered self-exile for their principles, had raised a body of "provincials" in the British service, and had persuaded the authorities at home that the majority of the valley's people would rise for the Crown whenever a British army should appear.

On the basis of this combination of military and political interests, the ministry decided to make a commitment in the Mohawk-Ontario Country and Lt. Col. Barry St. Leger of the 34th Regiment of Foot was given its command with the local rank of brigadier.

General St. Leger was given 100 men from each of two regiments stationed in Canada, the 34th and the 8th; Sir John Johnson's Regiment (the Greens); a company of rangers under Walter Butler; and 342 Hanau Chasseurs (light infantry or Jägers). To these were to be added "a sufficient number of Canadians and Indians." The expedition also had 40 artillerymen to serve the six-Pounders, two three-Pounders, and four 4.4-inch "Coehorn" mortars.<sup>14</sup> Of the Hanau troops, only one company joined the expedition. Exact figures of St. Leger's strength cannot be established, but an estimated 700-800 white troops and, according to tradition, 800 to 1,000 Indians comprised his force.<sup>15</sup>

The British regulars and militia left Lachine near Montreal on or about June 23. When he left Montreal, St. Leger had received intelligence about Fort Stanwix to the effect that "there were 60 Men in a picketed place." <sup>16</sup> Upon this information, the commander formulated his plan to make a dash through the wilderness and storm what he believed to be a very weak frontier post, which was consistent with his ordnance capability. Col. Daniel Claus was skeptical about the accuracy of this intelligence and he sent out a reconnaissance party that reported a very different situation:

Between 60 & 70 Leagues from Montreal my reconnoitering party returned and met me with 5 prisoners: (one a Lieut) and 4 scalps having defeated a working party of 16 rebels, as they were cutting Sodd, <sup>17</sup> towards repairing and finishing the old Fort which is a regular Square, and garrisoned by upwards of 600 Men, the Repairs far advanced, and the Rebels expecting us, and were acquainted with our Strength and Rout [e]. I immediately forwarded the Prisoners to the Brigr. [Brigadier] who was about 15 Leagues in our Rear. On his Arrival within a few Leagues of Buck Island he sent for me, and talking over the Intelligence the Rebel Prisrs. gave, he owned that if they intended to defend themselves in that Fort, our Artillery were not sufficient to take it, however he said he was determined to get the Truth of these Fellows. I told him that [?] examined them separately they agreed in their story; and here the Brigr. had still an opportunity & time of sending for a better train of artillery, and wait for the junction of the Chasseurs which must have secured us success as every one will allow, however he was still full of his alert, making little of the Prisrs Intelligence. <sup>18</sup>

Although St. Leger refused to wait for more Germans and send back for additional artillery, he agreed to go to Oswego, which he had intended to by-pass, and join the Indians who were assembled there.

Since July 8, Claus had been superintendent of the expedition's Indians, and he wrote concerning the junction with the Indians:

The Brigr. set out from ye Island [Buck Island] upon his Alert the 19th July. I having been ordered to proceed to Oswego with Sr. John Johnson's Regt. and a Compy of Chasseurs lately arrived, [?] to convene & prepare the Indians to join the Brigr. at Fort Stanwix, on my Arrival at Oswego 23 July I found Jose[ph] Brant there, who acquainted me that his party consi [sting] of abt. 300 Indns would be in that day, and having been more than 2 months upon Service, were destitute of Necessaries Ammunition & some Arms, Joseph at the same time complaining of having been very scantily supplied by Colo. Butler with Ammunition when at Niagra in the Spring...

The 24 of July I received an Express from Brigr. St. Leger at Salmon Creek to repair thither with what Arms & Vermilion I had, and that *he wished* I would come prepared for a March thro' the Woods, as to Arms & Vermilion I had none, but prepared myself to go upon the March and was ready to set off when Joseph came into my Tent and told me that as no person was on the Spot to take care of the Number of Indians with him, he apprehended in case I should leave them they would become disgusted & disperse, which might prevent the rest of the 6 Nations to assemble, and be hurtful to the Expedition, and begd I would first

represent those Circumstances to the Brigr. by Letter. Br. St. Leger mentioned indeed my going was chiefly intended to quiet the Indns. with him who were very drunk & riotous, and Captn. Tice who was the Messenger informed me, that the Brigr. ordered the Indians a Quart of Rum apiece which made them all beastly drunk and in which Case it is not in the power of Man to quiet them; Accordingly I mentioned to the Brigr. by Letter the Consequences that might affect his Majestys Indn Interest in case I was to leave so large a Number of Indns. that [were] come already, & still expected. Upon which Representation and finding the Indians disapproved of the Plan and w [ere] unwilling to proceed, the Brigr. came away from Salm [on] Creek, and arrived the next day at Oswego with the Compy of 8th & 34 Regt. and abt 250 Indians.

Having equiped Josephs party with what Necessaries and Ammunition I had, I appointed the rest of the 6 Nations to Assemble at the 3 Rivers a convenient place of Rendezvous & in the way to Fort Stanwix, and desired Col. Butler [to] follow me with the Indians be brought with him from Niagara and equip them all at 3 Rivers.<sup>19</sup>

Obtaining and holding the cooperation of the Indians was no easy matter. They were somewhat less than unanimous in their desire to commit themselves to the active support of British interest. There were too many memories of white men breaking their promises and of using the Indian in advancing their own self-interest. The white man who had title to their affection and loyalty, Sir William Johnson, was dead, and there was no one who could really assume his mantle. Relations between Daniel Claus and John Butler were not harmonious.<sup>20</sup> Joseph Brant, who was uniquely able to relate to both races, endeavored to secure fair treatment for his fellows, at the same time binding them to the British cause. Neither Sir John, who should have inherited some of his father's great skill in dealing with the red men, nor St. Leger, whose training and background ill fitted him to deal with an aboriginal people, could through their personal leadership command the Indians' loyalty, much less their obedience. There was never a time when St. Leger could depend upon his Indian allies' unreserved cooperation—they were always an unknown quantity in the tactical equation.

While St. Leger's composite force assembled and launched its invasion of the northwestern frontier, events took place in the Mohawk Valley that affected its outcome. One of these was a confrontation between Joseph Brant and Brig. Gen. Nicholas Herkimer, leader of the pro-American Germans and commanding general of the Tryon County militia. The details of the meeting are obscure and capable of contradictory interpretations. The general may have urged Brant to support the rebellion or at least remain neutral. The latter declared for the king and, without molestation from the militia, withdrew his people to Canajoharie Castle and, as had been noted, eventually joined St. Leger. At least some Americans believed that Herkimer had not conducted himself very well, and his leadership was compromised, a factor that was to have considerable influence when he attempted to support the fort a few weeks later.<sup>21</sup>

Almost simultaneous with this event, General Schuyler, while Burgoyne's main column was at Crown Point, learned something definite about the British plan. On June 29 he wrote Herkimer that he had heard that Sir John Johnson was on his way to Oswego and planned to attack Stanwix, and he ordered him to have the militia ready to support Gansevoort "at a moments warning."<sup>22</sup> During the next day, he wrote to Gansevoort: "A report prevails that Sir John Johnson intends to attack your post. You will therefore put yourself in the best posture of

defence . . . I have written General Herkimer to support you with the militia, in case you should be attacked. Give him therefore the most early intelligence if any enemy should approach you.<sup>23</sup>

Intelligence that his fort was likely to be attacked did not take Gansevoort by surprise. As early as May 28, Oneida Indians reported that they had met hostiles on their way to Osewego who intended to attack the fort.<sup>24</sup> He and his men drove themselves, working against time to make the fort defensible and felling trees to obstruct Wood Creek.<sup>25</sup> His personnel problem was critical, and he feared a surprise while his men were on fatigue.

General Schuyler immediately took steps to relieve the manpower problem and ordered Herkimer to put 200 militiamen to clearing the road between Forts Dayton and Stanwix, so that reinforcement of Gansevoort might be expedited. Another 200 men were to be dispatched to reinforce the garrison.<sup>26</sup> The general was not leaning upon a very sturdy reed. The Tyron County Committee was begging him to send Continental troops to the valley at almost the same moment he was ordering Herkimer to call out 400 men to assist Gansevoort. This was at a time when Burgoyne was advancing southward from Ticonderoga and Schuyler was desperately trying to impede that advance and save his army for a future stand. Writing from Fort Edward on July 10, he said:

I am sorry, very sorry, that you should be calling upon me for assistance of Continental troops, when I have already spared you all I could [the 3d New York] For God's sake do not forget that you are an overmatch for any force the enemy can bring against you, if you will act with spirit.<sup>27</sup>

The committee acted with a spirit, but not the kind the general desired. Poor Herkimer, who had to implement Schuyler's directions, wrote concerning the order to reinforce Gansevoort:

Necessity urgeth me to trouble you again with these to acquaint you of the present circumstances of our county. Agreeable to your direction, I ordered 100 men of my brigade for reinforcement of Fort Schuyler, but with great trouble I got them to assemble for march. The first arrived Party I sent along with some Officers to assist respectively with work and guard in repair of the road to Fort Schuyler, but instead of advancing of the others to be expected, I must hear to my surprise that they have been stopped in their march and countermanded entirely by an order of the committee chairman, Lt. Colo. Wm Seeber and a few members of the committee, as the inclosure will convince your honor clearly. I resented immediately these contrary proceedings, whereupon another committee meeting was called. I also renewed my orders that such a number of militia should march, and the committee at their last convention repealed the orders to the colonels, that the ordered militia should march on. But that stopping of the militia by the committee as aforesaid, made such a confusion and discouragement that I hardly got and was able to dispatch today a number of men sufficient to guard the battoes being loaded at German Flatts with provisions, arms and ammunition for Fort Schuyler. It appears a general disturbance and declining of courage in the militia of our county, for reason of which they allege that they see themselves exposed to a soon invasion of enemies and particularly of a large number of cruel savages, and foresaken of any assistance of troops to save the country. They alone think themselves not able to resist such enemies, for if they would gather themselves to oppose their poor wives and children would be then left helpless and fall prey to

merciless savages. I can assure you, that some are already busy moving away, some declare openly that if the enemy shall come, they will not leave home, but stay with their families, and render themselves over to the enemy, as they can't help themselves otherwise without succor. I may say, whole numbers of men in each district are so far discouraged, that they think it worthless to fight, and will not obey orders for battle, if the county is not in time succoured with at least 1,500 men, Continental troops. The loss of the important Fort Ticonderoga and Mt. Independence made the greatest number of our affected inhabitants downhearted, and maketh the disaffected bold. . . . I was urged to promise the men, I sent to guard the battoes, and on the road as above mentioned, they shall not stay longer than three weeks from home to home and the committee orders are but for 16 days.<sup>28</sup>

Schuyler ordered Wesson's Massachusetts Continental Regiment to move into Tryon County to encourage the people.<sup>29</sup> Reinforcements for the fort's garrison arrived from the 3d New York and the New York militia on July 19.<sup>30</sup>

In an effort to improve both the strength and the morale of the people, Schuyler placed all of the troops in the county under the command of a senior colonel, Goose van Schaick, of the 1st New York, who had been wounded at Ticonderoga on July 6.<sup>31</sup>

The people at the fort became increasingly conscious of the dangers of the hour as work parties of militia labored under the protection of Continentals to obstruct Wood Creek, as the reports of scouts brought news of the approaching enemy, and as hostile Indians prowled the woods trying to way-lay members of the garrison and local inhabitants. On Sunday, July 27, three girls went out to pick raspberries about 500 yards from the fort. A party of Indians fired on them, killing and scalping two and wounding the third. In order to protect his workers from ambush and to concentrate his manpower, Gansevoort called in the Wood Creek parties.<sup>32</sup> During the next day, he sent away "those women which belonged to the Garrison which have children with whom went the Man that was Scalped the Girl that was Wounded Yesterday & Sick in the Hospital."<sup>33</sup>

Oneidas and friendly Mohawks sent messages to the fort informing the commander of the progress of St. Leger's column and the whereabouts of Indian parties. These Indians were in a dangerous situation. The other nations of the Confederacy were not likely to be merciful to any of their ancient allies who took a pacifist's position. Neutrality in any war is difficult and often dangerous. In border warfare, it is practically impossible. If the Americans failed to turn back the British advance, the future of the friendly tribes would not be happy.

Capt. Thomas De Witt, who had been left at Fort Dayton by Colonel Willett, arrived on the 13th with about fifty men of Gansevoort's regiment, and Maj. Ezra Badlam brought in 150 men of Col. James Wesson's 9th Massachusetts. The fort's commissary, a man named Hanson, arrived the same day with word that seven bateaux, loaded with provisions and ammunition were on their way up-stream.<sup>34</sup> Within 24 hours, Oneidas brought word that there were 100 "Strange Indians" at the old Royal Block House on their way to the fort. Fearing that they intended to intercept the bateaux, Gansevoort dispatched 100 men under Captain Benschoten to reinforce the bateaux-guard.<sup>35</sup>

Gansevoort knew that it could be only a matter of hours before the fort would be tried by the invaders, and he completed his preparations to receive them. Colonel Willett's Orderly Book records the disposition of the garrison:

August 1, 1777

A picquet guard to mount this evening consisting of 1 capt 3 sub [subalterns] 4 sergeants, 1 drummer & 80 privates who are in case of alarm by the firing of a gun to mount and man the bastions, 1 commissioned officer 1 sergeant 1 corporal and 20 privates on each bastion, and if the officer commanding the picquet should think the alarm of sufficient importance he is immediately to order the drums to beat the alarm, upon which the garrison is to turn out Immediately and to repair to the alarm posts, Major Badlam's detachment to man the S. E. bastion and adjacent curtain, Captains De Witt, Swartout and Bleecker to man the N. E. bastion Capt. Gregg's Company to repair to the parade till further order...<sup>36</sup>

Blocking Wood Creek had been so effective that St. Leger's column was advancing too slowly to suit his purposes, and he feared that additional men and supplies would reach the fort before he could get into an investing position. In order to obtain intelligence and intercept any relief parties, he sent an advance guard under Lieutenant Bird toward the fort. The lieutenant had difficulty with Indians, most of whom would not advance.<sup>37</sup>

Upon receiving the lieutenant's report that closed with the statement: "those with the scout of fifteen I had the honor to mention to you in my last, are sufficient to invest Fort Stanwix if you honor me so far as not to order the contrary," the commander replied:

Your resolution of investing Fort Stanwix is perfectly right; and to enable you to do it with greater effect, I have detached Joseph [Brant] and his corps of Indians to reinforce you. You will observe that I will have nothing but an investiture made; and in case the enemy observing the discretion and judgment with which it is made, should offer to capitulate, you are to tell them that you are sure I am well disposed to listen to them: this is not to take any glory or honour out of a young soldier's hands, but by the presence of the troops to prevent the barbarity and carnage which will ever obtain where Indians make so superior a part of a detachment ...<sup>38</sup>

It is easy to laugh at the brigadier's optimism in imagining that the garrison might surrender to so limited a display of force, but he shared two fairly common attitudes of his contemporaries: disdain for provincial arms and determination, and a humane fear of what Indians might do to surrendered persons in the absence of a large number of regular troops. While he naturally hoped that a mere show of force would persuade the Americans to surrender, he probably did not really expect them to; and his orders to Bird simply provided for the eventuality.

After the advanced party reached the ruins of Fort Newport, the bateaux that Gansevoort was expecting approached Fort Stanwix. Colbrath's August 2nd entry in his journal described the event:

Four batteaus arrived being those the Party went to meet having a Guard of 100 Men of Colonel Weston's [Wesson] Regiment from Fort Dayton under the Command of Lieut-Col. Millen [Mellen] of that Regiment The Lading being brought safe into the Fort the Guard marched in when our Centinels on the SW

Bastion discovered the Enemys fires in the woods near Fort Newport, upon which the Troops ran to their Respective Alarm posts in this Time we discovered some Men Running from the Landing towards the Garrison On their coming they Informed us, that the Batteau Men who had staid behind when the Guard marched into the Fort had been Fired on by the Enemy at the Landing that two of them were wounded, the Master of the Batteaus taken prisoner and one Man Missing. A party of 30 Men with a field piece was sent out in the Evening to set Fire to two Barns standing a Little distance from the Fort, Two cannon from the SW Bastion loaded with Grape Shott, were first Fired at the Barnes to drive of [f] the Enemys Indians that might have been Sculking about them when the party having Effectted their Design Return'd<sup>39</sup>

The advanced party had failed to accomplish its immediate mission, i.e., intercepting the supply boats, but the "investiture" of Fort Stanwix was begun. St. Leger was not able to commit all of his men to laying siege to the camp, because 110 of them were employed for nine days clearing the obstacles from Wood Creek and another party to cutting a temporary road from Fish Creek over which to bring artillery and stores.<sup>40</sup>

On the day the siege opened, two important events have been recorded as taking place. The first occurred early in the morning of August 3rd, when a flag made by the garrison was raised on one of the fort's bastions, and a salute was fired. A tradition developed during the nineteenth century that this flag was the first "Stars and Stripes" to fly over American troops (9see the Appendix for a detailed discussion of this flag).

The second event is also deeply rooted in tradition, and involves a story which states that on the day the siege was opened St. Leger paraded his troops to overawe the garrison. Hoffman Nickerson, as usual without citing a source, records it as follows:

St. Leger's first thought was to impress the garrison. Accordingly he held a review of his entire force within sight of the besieged. From their palisaded earthworks Gansevoort and his men could see the white breeches and scarlet coats of the British infantry, the blue coats of the British artillerymen, and green faced with red of the German chasseurs, and the green faced with white which gave Sir John Johnson's regiment the name of Royal Greens. Here and there may have appeared the black skull cap fronted with a brass plate and the green coat faced vermillion which were the official uniform of Butler's rangers. But for the most part these last seem to have been painted and dressed like Indians. If so they increased what must have been the deep-set impression made upon those within, that is, that of St. Leger's command the greater number were savages. The sight of the Indians with their feathers, their hideous warpaint, tomahawks, and scalping knives, and the sound of their war whoop, showed the garrison vividly enough what would be their own fate should their resistance fail and what would happen to the settlements behind them.

At the same time the review must have shown them that in white men alone the numbers of St. Leger's force were at most equal and if anything inferior to their own.<sup>41</sup>

Christopher Ward, also without citing a source, told the same story in less detail.<sup>42</sup> Contemporary American and British reports that have been consulted in the preparation of this study do not document such a review. Colbrath did record in his Journal for August 3 that "about three o'clock this afternoon the Enemy shewed themselves to the Garrison on all Sides Carry'd off some Hay from a Field near the Garrison."<sup>43</sup> However, this falls short of corroborating the dramatic show of force that Nickerson and Ward described.

At 3 p.m., St. Leger sent Captain Tice under a flag to demand the fort's surrender and offered protection to the garrison. Colbrath recorded that the demand and promise were "Rejected with disdain."<sup>44</sup> William L. Stone, who was not above tampering with his sources in the interest of a good story, gave this text of the British general's proclamation:

By BARRY ST. LEGER, Esq., commander-in-chief of a chosen body of troops from the grand army, as well as an extensive corps of Indian allies from all the nations, &c., &c.

The forces entrusted to my command are designed to act in concert, and upon a common principle, with the numerous armies and fleets which already display on every quarter of America, the power, justice, and, when properly sought, the mercy of the king.

The cause in which the British arms are thus exerted, applies to the most affecting interest of the human heart, and the military servants of the crown, at first called forth for the sole purpose of restoring the rights of the constitution, now combine with love of their country and duty to their sovereign, the other extensive incitements which spring from a due sense of the general privileges of mankind. To the eyes and ears of the temperate part of the public, and to the breast of suffering thousands in the provinces, be the melancholy appeal, whether the present unnatural rebellion has not been made a foundation for the completest system of tyranny that even God in his displeasure suffered for a time to be exercised over a froward and stubborn generation. Arbitrary imprisonment, confiscation of property, persecution and torture unprecedented in the inquisitions of the Romish Church, are among the palpable enormities that verify the affirmative. These are inflicted by Assemblies and committees who dare to profess themselves friends of liberty, upon the most quiet subjects, without distinction of age or sex, for the sole crime, often for the sole suspicion of having adhered in principle to the government under which they were born, and to which by every tie, divine and human, they owe allegiance. To consummate these shocking proceedings, the profanation of religion is added to the most profligate prosecution of common reason; the consciences of men are set at naught; and multitudes are compelled, not only to bear arms, but also to swear subjection to usurpation they abhor.

Animated by these considerations; at the head of troops in the full powers of health, discipline and valor, determined to strike when necessary, and anxious to spare where possible; I by these presents invite and exhort all persons, in all places, where the progress of this army may point, and by the blessing of God I will extend it far, to maintain such a conduct as may justify me in protecting these lands, habitations and families. The intention of this address is to hold forth

security, not depredation to the country. To those whom spirit and principle may induce them to partake the glorious task of redeeming their countrymen from dungeons, and reestablishing the blessings of legal government, I offer encouragement and employment; and upon the first intelligence of their associations, I will find means to assist their undertakings. The domestic, the industrious, the infirm, and even the timid inhabitants, I am desirous to protect, provided they remain quietly at their houses; that they do not suffer their cattle to be removed, nor their corn or forage to be secreted or destroyed; that they do not break up their bridges or roads; nor by any other acts, directly or indirectly, endeavor to obstruct the operations of the king's troops or supply those of the enemy. Every species of provision brought to my camp will be paid for at an equitable rate in solid coin. If, notwithstanding these sincere endeavors and sincere inclinations to effect them, the frenzy of hostility should remain, I trust I shall stand acquitted in the eyes of God and man, in denouncing and executing the vengeance of the state against wilful outcasts. The messengers of justice and of wrath await them in the field and devastation, famine and every concomitant horror that a reluctant but indispensable prosecution of military duty must occasion, will bar the way to their return.

Barry St. Leger  
By order of the Commander-in-chief  
Will., OSB- HAMILTON, Secretary.<sup>45</sup>

This proclamation was an almost verbatim copy of General Burgoyne's and it was equally effective.

The Americans continued to try to work at strengthening the fort against the assault that they were certain St. Leger would undertake whenever he was able to bring up his artillery and the men who were working on the temporary road and clearing a passage on Wood Creek. However, the continuing fire from the Indians harassed the working parties, forcing them to work at night. On the night of the 4th, details went out and brought in twenty-seven stacks of hay for the cattle that were impounded in the fort's ditch and to burn a house and barn that obstructed the field of fire.<sup>46</sup> The Indians' fire resulted in two deaths among the garrison on the 4th and 5th, and six were wounded during the former. The barracks that Lamarquise had erected outside the fort was burned by the British during the late afternoon of the 5th.<sup>47</sup>

On the same afternoon, St. Leger received word from the late Sir William Johnson's Indian wife, Molly Brant, that a relief column was on its way to the fort and would be within ten or twelve miles of the British camp by that night. St. Leger now had a serious tactical problem to solve. He had to sustain the siege and destroy the relief column.

The relief column was General Herkimer's response to learning of St. Leger's advance on the fort. On June 30 he ordered the Tryon County militia to muster at Fort Dayton. By August 4, between 800 and 900 men assembled and the march to raise the siege was begun. On the night of the 5th, Herkimer sent three or four scouts forward to inform Gansevoort of his advance and to ask the fort's commander to cooperate if the enemy should attack the militia. Gansevoort was asked to fire three shots to acknowledge receipt of the runners and to express his willingness to make a sortie when Herkimer's column approached, then to engage the enemy about the fort and prevent them from concentrating on the militia.

On the morning of the 6th, Herkimer had reached a critical point in his march to the fort's aid. No cannon shots had been heard from its defenders. Should he continue to advance or await the expected signal? He convened a council of war to discuss the matter. His preference was for waiting for the signal, but the overwhelming majority of his officers favored an immediate advance. The discussion became heated, and as the commander maintained his opinion with traditional Teutonic stubbornness some of the officers accused him of Tory sympathies or cowardice, making much of the fact that one of his brothers was an officer in Sir John's regiment. Berated and maligned, the old soldier-farmer yielded and gave the order to march. With his Oneida scouts in the lead, the general took the head of a double column of about 600 men, followed by a 200-man rear-guard.

When he received the news of Herkimer's advance, St. Leger dispatched about 400 Indians and the light infantry company of Sir John's regiment, under Sir John, Colonel Butler and Joseph Brant, to ambush the military relief force.

With surprisingly poor march security, the Tryon men marched to a place about six miles from the fort where the road crossed a broad ravine about fifty-feet deep with very steep banks. There the Anglo-Indian party had laid an ambush with the light infantrymen on the west and the Indians along the ravine's margin in a curve, leaving the eastern side open to Herkimer's men. When the middle of the column was deep in the ravine, the light infantrymen were to check its head while the Indians closed the circle around the rear-guard.

The main body of the column made its way into the ravine and up the western side when the Indians east of the ravine opened fire and rushed the road-bound militiamen. The trap was sprung too early to catch the rear-guard, which fled. Herkimer, at the column's head, turned back to investigate the firing. The light infantry and Indians on the west rushed forward; and the general's horse fell dead and he suffered a wounded leg.

The circle was completed; and the Americans took cover behind trees, formed small circles, and fought with a valor born of desperation. After three-quarters of an hour, a cloudburst wet the muskets' priming and for an hour the fighting stopped. During the lull, Herkimer's men took cover in pairs so that, when one had fired and was reloading, the other would be ready to shoot any of the enemy that attacked.

The Tryon County men gave a good account of themselves that day; and the Indians, who suffered severely, began to lose their aggressiveness. At this point, a second detachment of Sir John's regiment, under Major Watts, arrived on the scene. He ordered his men to turn their coats inside out, concealing their uniforms. Thus they advanced under the guise of a sortie from the fort. The militia discovered the ruse and attacked, and a fierce hand-to-hand fight followed that ended when the Indians retreated, followed by the white troops. The Battle of Oriskany was over. The militia was too badly mauled to pursue, and they gathered their wounded to begin the march back to Fort Dayton.<sup>48</sup>

The morning of August 6 was a time of uncertainty at the fort. The garrison noted that the Indians, who had been maintaining a continual firing, were going away from the immediate area toward the lower landing on the Mohawk. Not knowing what was really happening, the officers and men feared that something was afoot in the river valley and that the loyalty of its inhabitants, would weaken if the fort were reported taken. Colbrath expressed the men's fears in these terms:

This Morning the Indians were seen going off from around the Garrison towards the Landing as they withdraw we had not much firing. Being uneasy least the Tories should Report that the Enemy had taken the Fort Lieut. Diefendorf was Ordered to get Ready to set of [f] for Albany this Evening to Inf Gen' Schuyler of our Situation.<sup>49</sup>

But before the lieutenant could get away, the men whom Herkimer had sent with the message of his approach arrived, and Colbrath recorded that:

...between 9 & 10 this morning three Militia Men Arrived here with a Letter from Gen' Harkeman [Herkimer] wherein he writes that he had Arrived at Oriska [Oriskany] with 1000 Militia in Order to Relieve the Garrison and open the Communication which was then Entirely Blocked up and that if Colonel Should hear a Firing of small Arms desired he wou'd send a party from the Garrison to Reinforce Him. General Harkeman desired that the Colonel would fire three Cannon if the Three Men got safe into the Fort with his Letter which was done and followed by three cheers by the whole Garrison. According to Genl Harkemans Request the Colonel Detached two Hundred Men and one Field piece under command of Lieut. Colonel Willett with Orders to proceed down the Road to meet the Generals party.<sup>50</sup>

In his letter of August 11, his first account of the events, Colonel Willett wrote:

Wednesday morning there was an unusual silence; we discovered some of the enemy marching along the edge of the woods downwards. About eleven o'clock, three men got into the fort, who brought a letter from Gen. Harkeman, of the Tryon county militia, advising us that he was at Eriska (eight miles from the fort) with part of his militia, and proposed to force his way to the fort, for our relief — In order to render him what service we could in his march, it was agreed that I should make a sally from the fort with two hundred and fifty men, consisting one half of Gansevoort's, and one half of Massachusetts men, and one field piece, (an iron three pounder) The men were instantly paraded, and I ordered the following dispositions to be made: Thirty men for the advanced guard to be commanded by Van Bencotén and Lieut Stockwell; thirty for the rear guard under the command of Capt. Allen of the Massachusetts troops, and Lieut. Durffendreff; thirty for flank guards, to be commanded by Capt \_\_\_\_\_ from Massachusetts, and Ensign Chase. The main body formed into eight subdivisions, commanded by Capt. Bleaker, Lieutenants Conine, Bogardus, M'Clenme, and Ostrander, Ensign Bayley, Lewis, and Dennison, Lieut. Ball, the only supernumerary officer, to march with me. Capt. Johnson to bring up the rear of the main body— Capt. Swardwoundt, with Ensigns Magee and Arent, with fifty men to guard the field piece, which was under the direction of Major Badlam.<sup>51</sup>

Thus the detachment from the fort set out down the old military road that lay between Albany and Oswego. When the column reached a point a little more than half a mile from the fort, it came upon Sir John Johnson's camp and its mission was altered on the spot. The troops raided this camp, the nearby Indian one, and perhaps Lieutenant Bird's about half a mile away at the "Lower Landing Place." The colonel reported:

Nothing could be more fortunate than this enterprize. We totally routed two of the enemy's encampments, destroyed all their provision that was in them, brought off upwards of fifty brass kettles, and more than a hundred blankets (two articles which were much needed by us) with a number of muskets, tomahawks, spears, ammunition, cloathing, deer skins, a variety of Indian affairs, and five colours, which on our return to the fort, were displayed on our flagstaff, under the Continental flag. The Indians took chiefly to the woods, the rest of their troops to the river. The number of men lost by the enemy is uncertain, six lay dead in their encampment, two of which were Indians, several scattered about in the woods, but their greatest loss appeared to be in crossing the river, and no inconsiderable number on the opposite shore. I was happy in preventing the men from scalping even the Indians, being desirous, if possible, of teaching even the Savages humanity. But the men were better employed, and kept in excellent order. We were out so long, that a number of British regulars, accompanied by what Indians, &c. could be rallied, had marched down to a thicket on the other side of the river, about fifty yards from the road we were to pass on our return; near this place I had ordered the field piece. The ambush was not quite formed when we discovered them, and gave them a well directed fire. —Here especially, Major Badlam, with his field piece, did considerable execution—here, also, the enemy were annoyed by the fire of several cannon from the fort, as they marched round to form the ambuscade. The enemy's fire was very wild, and though we were very much exposed, did not execution at all.<sup>52</sup>

The loot taken from the camps included "several bundles of papers and a parcel of letters belonging to our garrison, which they had taken from our militia, but not yet opened... There were likewise papers belonging to Sir John Johnson, and several others of the enemy's officers, with letters to and from Gen. St. Leger, their Commander; their papers have been of some service to us."<sup>53</sup>

From prisoners brought in from the camp, the garrison learned about the fight at Oriskany, the enemy's strength, the number and type of his artillery.<sup>54</sup>

The question of why Willett stopped to plunder the camp instead of obeying the order to meet Herkimer is not clearly answered—in fact, it is not broached in the contemporary documents. The men from the fort did not know that the militia had been engaged, but their curiosity must have been piqued by the absence of so large a part of the enemy. Apparently, Willett simply decided that the immediate and obvious benefits to be derived from attacking the camps outweighed any obligation to rendezvous with Herkimer. Although it could not have influenced Willett's decision, it was too late to have done the militia much good. Adam Hellmer, one of Herkimer's runners, testified that he entered the fort at one o'clock, although Colbrath wrote that the men came in by 10 a.m. and Willett put their arrival at "about 11 o'clock." If, as is probable, Hellmer was correct, Willett's detail did not leave the fort until nearly mid-afternoon, too late to have influenced the outcome at Oriskany. This fact, along with the results of his raid, probably muted criticism of his failure to execute his orders.

St. Leger, from his main encampment northeast of the fort, undertook to intercept Willett's sortie, but arrived too late to prevent its successful return with the captured goods.<sup>55</sup>

The raid on the Indian camp was to have especially significant results. The loss of their clothes, blankets, and provisions coupled with the loss of several of their chiefs at Oriskany dampened their enthusiasm for what was threatening to become a long, unrewarding siege, a type of operation for which they rarely had an affinity. In fact, the British situation was not nearly good enough to give much promise of success, unless St. Leger could persuade the fort's garrison that defense of the post was doomed to failure. Nevertheless, he put the best possible face on conditions when he reported to Burgoyne:

...on the 5th I learnt from discovering parties on the Mohawk River that A Body of one thousand Militia were on their March to raise the Siege. On the confirmation of this News I moved a large body of Indians with some troops the same night to lay in ambuscade for them on their march —They fell into it —The compleatest victory was obtained. Above 400 lay dead on the field amongst the number of whom were almost all the principal Movers of Rebellion in that Country — There are six or seven hundred men in the Fort —The Militia will never rally —All that I am to apprehend therefore that will retard my progress in joining you, is a reinforcement of what they call their regular troops by way of Halfmoon up the Mohawk River. A diversion therefore from your army by that quarter will greatly expedite my junction with either of the grand armies.<sup>56</sup>

Of course, Burgoyne was many miles north of Halfmoon and in no condition to send the Mohawk expedition assistance in any form.

The men in the fort enjoyed a respite from enemy fire during most of the 7th, although "at 11 o'clock this Evening the Enemy came near the Fort called to our Centinels, telling them to come out again with Fixed Bayonets and they should give us Satisfaction for Yesterdays work, after which they fired 4 small Cannon at the Fort we laughed at them heartily and they returned to Rest." <sup>57</sup> At midnight, the runners from Herkimer's column and a militiaman who brought news of the fight at Oriskany set out for the lower valley.

The cannon fire that Colbrath reported indicated that St. Leger had finally brought up his artillery. More shots were fired into the fort during the day, and the garrison "in order to Return the compliment, they [the enemy] were Salluted with a few Balls from our Cannon." <sup>58</sup>

At about 5 p.m., St. Leger's adjutant, Major Ancrum, Colonel Butler, and a surgeon came to the fort under a flag. Colonel Willett's "Narrative" gives this dramatic example of total recall:

The afternoon of the next day, the beating of the chimade and the appearance of a white flag, was followed by a request that Colonel Butler, who commanded the Indians, with two other officers, might enter the fort, with a message to the commanding officer. Permission having been granted, they were conducted blindfolded into the fort, and received by Colonel Gansevoort in his dining room. The windows of the room were shut and candles lighted; the table also was spread with crackers, cheese and wine. Three chairs placed at one end of the table, were occupied by Colonel Butler and the other two officers who had come with thim; at the other end, Colonel Gansevoort. Colonel Mellon and Colonel Willett were seated. Seats were also placed around the table for as many officers as could be accommodated, while the rest of the room was nearly filled with the other officers of the garrison indiscriminately; it being desirable that the officers in general should be witness to all that might take place. After passing around the wine,

with a few commonplace compliments, Major Ancrum, one of the messengers, with a very grave, stiff air, and a countenance full of importance, spoke, in nearly the following words:

"I am directed by Colonel St. Leger, the officer who commands the army now investing the garrison, to inform the commandant, that the colonel has, with much difficulty, prevailed on the Indians to agree, that if the garrison, without further resistance, shall be delivered up, with the public stores belonging to it, to the investing army, the officers and soldiers shall have all their baggage and private property secured to them. And in order that the garrison may have a sufficient pledge to this effect, Colonel Butler accompanies me to assure them that not a hair of the head of anyone of them shall be hurt." (Here turning to Colonel Butler, he said: "That, I think was the expression they made use of, was it not? To which the colonel answered, "Yes.")

I am likewise directed to remind the commandant that the defeat of General Herkimer must deprive the garrison of all hopes of relief, especially as General Burgoyne is now in Albany, so that, sooner or later, the fort must fall into our hands. Colonel St. Leger, from an earnest decision to prevent further bloodshed, hopes these terms will not be refused; as, in this case, it will be out of his power to make them again. It was with great difficulty the Indians consented to the present arrangement, as it would deprive them of the plunder which they always calculate upon on similar occasions. Should these, the present terms be rejected, it will be out of the power of the colonel to restrain the Indians, who are very numerous, and much exasperated not only from plundering the property but destroying the lives of, probably, the greater part of the garrison. Indeed, the Indians are so exceedingly provoked, and mortified by the losses they have sustained, in the late actions, having had several of their favorite chiefs killed, that they threaten—and the colonel, if the present arrangement should not be entered into, will not be able to prevent them from executing their threats—to march down the country, and destroy the settlement with its inhabitants. In this case, not only men, but women and children, will experience the sad effects of their vengeance. These considerations, it is ardently hoped, will produce a proper effect and induce the commandant by complying with the terms now offered, to save himself from further regret when it will be too late."

With the approbation of Colonel Gansevoort, Colonel Willett made the following reply. Looking the important major full in the face he observed:

"Do I understand you, sir? I think that you say, that you come from a British colonel, who is commander of the army which invests this fort; and, by your uniform, you appear to be an officer in the British service. You have made a long speech on the occasion of your visit, which, stripped of all its superfluities, amounts to this, that you come from a British colonel to the commandant of this garrison, to tell him that if he does not deliver up this garrison into the hands of your colonel, he will send his Indians to murder our women and children. You will please reflect, sir, that our blood will be on your heads, not ours. We are doing our duty; this garrison is committed to our charge, and we will take care of

it. After you get out of it, you may turn round and look at its outside, but never expect to come again, unless you come a prisoner. I consider the message you have brought a degrading one for a British officer to send, and by no means reputable for a British officer to carry. For my part, I declare, before I would consent to deliver this garrison to such a murdering set as your army, by your own accounts consists of, I would suffer my body to be filled with splinters and set on fire, as you know has been practiced, by such hordes of women and children killers as belong to your army.<sup>59</sup>

The deputation from the British commander presented a letter written by Colonel Peter Bellinger and Major John Frey, who had been captured at Oriskany, that read:

It is with concern we are to acquaint you that this was the fatal day in which the succors, which were intended for your relief, have been attacked and defeated with great loss of numbers killed, wounded and taken prisoners. Our regard for your safety and lives, and our sincere advice to you is, if you will avoid inevitable ruin and destruction, to surrender the fort you pretend to defend against a formidable body of troops and a good train of artillery, which we are witnesses of: when, at the same time, you have no farther supports or relief to expect. We are sorry to inform you that most of the principal officers are killed: to wit-General Herkimer, Colonels Cox, Seeber, Isaac Paris, Captain Graves and many others too tedious to mention. The British army from Canada being now perhaps before Albany, the possession of which place of course includes the conquest of the Mohawk River and this fort.<sup>60</sup>

Colonel Willett's post-war account differs from his first reports of the conference in detail and mood. His first version of the event, which is contained in his important August 11 letter, related that:

This evening [August 8] they sent us a flag, with which came their Adjutant-general, Capt Armstrong [Ancrum], Col. Butler, and a surgeon, the surgeon to examine Singleton's wounds; the principal business of the flag was to acquaint us, that Gen. St. Leger had, with much difficulty, prevailed on the Indians to agree, that if the Commanding Officer would give up the fort, the garrison should be secured from any kind of harm, that not a hair of their heads should be touched; but if not, the consequences to the garrison, should it afterwards fall into their hands, must be terrible; that the Indians were very much enraged, on account of their having a great number of their Chiefs killed in the late actions, and were determined, unless they got possession of the fort, to go down the Mohawk River, and fall upon its inhabitants. Our answer was, that should this be the case, the blood of their inhabitants would be upon the hands of Mr. Butler and his employers, not upon us, and that such proceedings would ever remain a stigma upon the name of Britain; but for our parts, we were determined to defend the fort.<sup>61</sup>

An account that appeared in August 28, 1777, issue of *The Independent Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, Boston, entitled "Extract of a Letter from a Officer of Distinction," who was probably Willett, read:

Friday,—Butler and a regular officer came into the fort, with proposals, representing that "Burgoyne was in Albany,—everything was lost—and it would be in vain for the fort to be obstinate, the militia were entirely routed,—the Indians were enraged at their loss, and that they feared the consequences of an obstinate resistance, as the fort must finally fall,—they were determined to have it,—that they had prevailed on the Indians so far that if the garrison would surrender immediately, they might march with their effects without molestation, and take themselves where they pleased; but otherwise they feared the consequences.

Col. Gansevoort answered, that he was surprised at their proposals, they implied a reflection upon the officers of the whole garrison—that they were not to be intimidated by threats—that he was determined to hold the fort as long as possible, and that he and his Men would die in the Trenches before he would surrender—at the same time took the occasion to remonstrate with Butler on the cruelty of their late practices, in scalping and murdering innocent inhabitants, particularly murdering the three little girls—Butler had little to say.<sup>62</sup>

The record is clear that the British made their proposal and that Colonel Gansevoort refused to entertain the idea of surrendering the fort. In fact, the only thing that would have persuaded him to do so would have been a loss of nerve. He knew that it was highly unlikely that Burgoyne had reached Albany, even if the main portion of the Northern Department's army had been defeated, which was improbable. He also knew that the British artillery was incapable of breaching his works; and he had no confidence in the British ability to restrain the Indians. Daniel Claus accurately summed up the reasons for the Colonel's refusal when he wrote: "The Rebels knowing their Strength in Garrison as well as Fortification and the Insufficiency of our Field pieces to hurt them, and apprehensive of being massacred by the Indians for the Loss they sustained in the Action [at Oriskany]. They rejected the Summons s[ai]d that they were determined to hold out to the last Extremity."<sup>63</sup>

Shortly after mid-night, Colonel Willett, accompanied by Lieutenant Levi Stockwell, left the fort to go to Fort Dayton to raise a relief expedition. It was from there that the colonel wrote his August 11 and August 13 letters.<sup>64</sup>

During the first day of the cease-fire following the conference, St. Leger sent a flag to the fort with a written statement of the demands presented on the previous day by Adjutant-General Ancrum. That paper read:

Camp before Fort Stanwix, August 9, 1777.

Sir:

Agreeable to your wishes, I have the honour to give you on paper, the message of yesterday, though I cannot conceive, explicit and humane as it was, how it could admit of more than one construction. After the defeat of the reinforcement, and the fate of all your principal leaders, on which, naturally, you built your hopes; and having the strongest reason from verbal intelligence; and the matter contained in the letters that fell into my hands, and knowing thoroughly the situation of General Burgoyne's army, to be confident that you are without resource—in my fears and tenderness for your personal safety, from the hands of Indians, enraged for the loss of some of their principal and most favourite leaders—I called to

Council, the chiefs of all the nations, and after having used every method that humanity could suggest, to soften their minds, and lead them patiently to bear their own losses, by reflecting on the irretrievable misfortunes of their enemies, I, at last, laboured the point my humanity wished for; which the chiefs assured me of, the next morning, after a consultation with each nation, that evening, at their fire places— Their answer in its fullest extent, they insisted should be carried by Colonel Butler; which he has given you in the most categorical manner; you are well acquainted that Indians never send messages without accompanying them with menaces on non-compliance, that a civilized enemy would never think of doing: you may rest assured therefor, that no insult was meant to be offered to your situation, by the King's servants, in the message they preemptorily demanded be carried by Colonel Butler.

I am now to repeat what has been told you by my Adjutant-general.

That provided you will deliver up your garrison, with every thing as it stood, at the moment the first message was sent, your people shall be, treated with every attention that a humane and generous enemy can give.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir, Your most obedient humble servant  
Barry St. Leger  
Brig Gen of his Majesty's forces.

P.S. I expect an immediate answer, as the Indians are extremely impatient; and if this proposal is rejected, I am afraid it will be attended with very fatal consequences, not only to you and your garrison, but the whole country down the Mohawk River—such consequences as will be very repugnant to my sentiments of humanity, but after this, entirely out of my power to prevent.

Barry St. Leger  
Colonel Gansevoort, commanding Fort Stanwix<sup>65</sup>

The fort's commander replied immediately:

Fort Schuyler, Aug 9, 1777

Sir:

Your letter of this morning's date I have received, in answer to which I say, that it is my determined resolution, with the forces under my command, to defend this fort and garrison to the last extremity, in behalf of the United American States, who have placed me here to defend it against all their enemies.

I have the honour to be, in  
Your most ob't humble serv't  
Peter Gansevoort  
Col. Commanding Fort Schuyler  
Gen. Barry St. Leger<sup>66</sup>

Although the armistice was to have lasted for three days, the British began to bombard the fort at 10:30 p.m. and continued a "well directed fire" all night. The fort's papers and money were stored in the bomb-proof in the southwest bastion. Artillery and small arms fire were exchanged at intervals during the next week with very limited effect on the garrison and none on the fort's fabric. On the 16th, Colbrath recorded that "the Enemy threw some Shells Horrisontally at our Works."<sup>67</sup> The explanation of this technique is found in St. Leger's report to Burgoyne:

...it was found that our cannon has not the least effect upon the sodwork of the fort, and that our royals [mortars] had only the power of teasing, as a six-inch plank was a sufficient security for their powder-magazine, as we learnt from deserters. At this time Lieutenant Glenie of the artillery, whom I had appointed to act as assistant engineer, proposed a conversion of the royals (if I may use the expression) into howitzers. The ingenuity and feasibility of this nuance striking me very forcibly, the business was set about immediately, and soon executed, when it was found that nothing prevented their operating with the desired effect but the distance, their chambers being too small to hold a sufficiency of powder. There was nothing now to be done but to approach the fort by a sap to such a distance that the ramparts might be brought within their portice, at the same time all materials were preparing to run a mine under the most formidable bastion.<sup>68</sup>

The Fleury map shows a portion of St. Leger's disposition of positions for the siege. The lack of a scale limits its usefulness in determining distances, but an estimate based upon the size of the square formed by the fort's bastions, 335 feet to the side, except for eastern face, the distance between the original battery positions and the fort was approximately 350 yards. The sap or approach was directed toward the northwest bastion.<sup>69</sup>

While St. Leger's men worked at the approach trench, the garrison and their enemies kept up the exchange of fire. The fort suffered little or no damage, although a few casualties occurred among its defenders. The effects of the American fire cannot be determined. On August 21 a woman in the fort who was "big with Child" was wounded in the thigh by the artillery fire. The next day, she gave birth to a daughter on the southwest bastion's bombproof, and Colbrath recorded that both and mother and child "do well with the Blessing of God."<sup>70</sup> The enemy diverted the stream that was the main water source, and the garrison dug wells within the fort. Sorties went out for a variety of purposes, and both sides lost men through desertion.<sup>71</sup>

While the siege continued, the British did not ignore the country that the fort defended. After the Battle of Oriskany, Sir John Johnson proposed to his commander that he be permitted to take 200 men and "a sufficient body of Indians" down the valley to bring the people back to the royal cause, but St. Leger "said he could not spare the men, and disapproved of it."<sup>72</sup> A few days later, Walter Butler took two regulars and three Indians to German Flats in an effort to enlist the assistance of the inhabitants in persuading the garrison to surrender. Butler carried with him a proclamation, signed by Sir John, Daniel Claus, and John Butler, that read:

*Camp before Fort Stanwix, Aug. 13*

*To the Inhabitants of Tryon County*

Notwithstanding the many and great injuries we have received in person and property at your hands, and being at the head of victorious troops, we most ardently wish to have peace restored to this once happy country; to obtain which

we are willing and desirous, upon a proper submission on your parts, to bury in oblivion all that is past, and hope that you are or will be convinced in the end, that we were your friends and good advisers, and not such wicked designing men as those who led you into error, and almost total ruin. You have, no doubt, great reason to dread the resentment of the Indians, on account of the loss they sustained in the late action, and the mulish obstinacy of your troops in this garrison but in them selves, for which reason the Indians declare, that if they do not surrender the garrison without further opposition, they will put every soul to death, not only the garrison, but the whole country, without any regard to age, sex, or friends—for which reason, it is become your indispensible duty, as you must answer the consequences, to send a deputation of your principal people, to oblige them immediately, to what in a very little time they must be forced, the surrender of the garrison—in which case we will engage on the faith of Christians to protect you from the violence of Indians.

Surrounded as you are by victorious armies, one half (if not the greater part) of the inhabitants friends of the government, without any resource, surely you cannot hesitate a moment to accept the terms proposed to you, by friends and well-wishers to the country.<sup>73</sup>

The garrison at Fort Dayton captured the little party, and nothing came of that ploy.<sup>74</sup>

While St. Leger's and Gansevoort's men contended for the Mohawk country, events elsewhere were taking place that were to be decisive in bringing failure to British designs. Gen. Philip Schuyler, whose command of the Northern Department placed upon him ultimate responsibility for the defense of the Mohawk Valley, was retreating southward along the Hudson before Burgoyne's hitherto victorious advance. He was struggling to retard that advance and prepare his main army for a stand that would halt the British invasion. Shortages, personality clashes, sectional animosities, political rivalries, and a succession of disheartening reverses conspired in making his task almost impossible. Yet he did not neglect his responsibilities in the western part of his command. During July, he worked at trying to obtain additional Continental troops for the Tryon County area and sought the state's assistance in finding units that could be sent up the Mohawk. He wrote letters to the Tryon County committees and General Herkimer that endeavored to encourage and advise them.

On August 6 Schuyler's assistance took a more concrete form when he ordered a Continental force to move toward Fort Stanwix. This contingent was followed by others on and after August 9. The Continentals were Brig. Gen. Ebenezer Learned's brigade of Massachusetts troops, which had been posted at Van Schaick's Island near the junction of the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers.<sup>75</sup> He also wrote to the Tryon County officials requesting that they cooperate with their militia.

The main body of Schuyler's army lay at the village of Stillwater, and from that place Maj. Gen. Benedict Arnold departed on August 13 to direct the relief of Fort Stanwix. There is a well-known story of his assignment to the command that had its origins in Isaac N. Arnold's *Life of Arnold* and has been repeated by many other writers including Hoffman Nickerson in the classic, *The Turning Point of the Revolution*:

On receiving at Stillwater the news, first of St. Leger's arrival before Stanwix, then of Herkimer's retreat from Oriskany, Schuyler had determined to relieve the

fort. According to the military custom of the time he called a council of war in which he proposed detaching a part of his own dispirited forty-five hundred to act against St. Leger.

The risk involved was high. Within twenty-four miles of them—a single day's forced march—Burgoyne lay at Fort Edward with seven thousand victorious troops. He might come down upon them. Indeed, as the council sat he was issuing orders to his main body to advance eight miles to Fort Miller, and for Fraser and his advanced corps to go on four miles farther the mouth of the Battenhill, where they would be only twelve miles from Schuyler and his unhappy little force. Of course Schuyler's council did not yet know of this advance, which was intended merely to cover the Bennington expedition, but as they saw the situation it is not surprising that all except Arnold opposed Schuyler's plan.

On the other hand, Schuyler undoubtedly reasoned from Burgoyne's delay that the army from Canada was having trouble with its transportation. He knew that to the eastward patriot forces were gathering which would soon either reinforce him or cut in on Burgoyne's left and rear. Finally, he thought it necessary to run risks on the Hudson in order to save the Mohawk. All along he had known the political situation in that district to be unsatisfactory. Should a Tory rising spring up there to assist St. Leger, the example might spread and the whole political basis of the Revolution in the North might go.

Schuyler's argument failed to persuade his officers. In his agitation he walked to and fro in the room, a pipe in his mouth. While doing so he heard some of them say, 'He means to weaken the army.' He well knew the New England rumors that he was at heart a traitor. Was it possible, he thought, that officers under his command believed the slander? Almost as he heard their words he found that he had bitten his pipestem clean through. Never to the end of his life could he forget the bitterness of that moment.

Nevertheless he controlled himself quickly. Indeed his instant of rage helped him to make up his own mind. He made no further effort to persuade, but said that he would take upon himself the responsibility of the expedition. Whereupon the fiery little Arnold sprang up and volunteered for the command.<sup>76</sup>

Isaac Arnold's version offers other details. After telling of the officers' opposition and the general's breaking the pipe, he wrote that Schuyler said: "Gentlemen: I shall take the responsibility upon myself; Fort Stanwix and the Mohawk Valley should be saved! Where is the brigadier who will command the relief? I shall beat up for volunteers tomorrow." No brigadier offered his services, and Benedict Arnold:

...though a major general and second in command, indignant that his friend should be so wronged, instantly volunteered. Impulsive, ever ready for deeds of daring, knowing how false and cruel were the imputations cast upon Schuyler, he at once offered his services, and they were gratefully accepted. On the next morning the drums were beaten through the camp for volunteers, and it was announced that Major General Arnold offered to lead them, and before noon 800 men had volunteered to follow him to the rescue of Gansevoort.<sup>77</sup>

No single contemporary source supports this story, and there are several facts that contradict it.

Starting with Nickerson's first sentence, Schuyler was not at Stillwater when he received news of St. Leger's arrival at Stanwix, of Herkimer's retreat from Oriskany, and made his decision to relieve the fort. He was at his home in Albany, which was his headquarters until he went to Stillwater on or about August 10. General Learned was already on the march toward Stanwix, and another brigadier was not required to command the relief. What was needed was a higher ranking general officer, and Arnold was the only major general on hand.

The beating of the drum for volunteers simply did not occur. The Continentals that were committed moved from Van Schaick's Island, more than 20 miles away, from three to seven days before the legendary council; and Arnold's instructions make it clear that he was to join those troops and take command of them—not that he was to take troops with him from Stillwater. In addition, Schuyler never referred to the fort as Fort Stanwix after it was renamed in his honor.

Schuyler's instructions to Arnold appear to support the part of the story that related to the latter's volunteering to command the relief expedition when he wrote: "It gives me greatest satisfaction that you have offered to go and conduct the military operations in the Tryon county."<sup>78</sup> However, the circumstances of his volunteering are not clear, especially in the light of a letter from Washington to Schuyler, dated July 24, in which he proposed that Arnold, "or some other sensible spirited officer," be assigned to Fort Stanwix" in case anything formidable should appear in that quarter."<sup>79</sup> The proposal was couched in terms that in a normal military interpretation would be almost tantamount to an order.

There is no evidence for representing Schuyler's general officers as opposed to the Mohawk undertaking. In fact, in one of his reports to Washington, Schuyler wrote that the detailing of the Massachusetts regiments was done "by the unanimous advice of all the general officers here [Stillwater]." <sup>80</sup>

Schuyler ordered Arnold to "repair thither [Tryon County] with all convenient speed and take upon you the command of all the Continental troops & such of the Militia as you can prevail upon to join your troops. Fort Schuyler is being besieged you will hasten to its relief and hope that the Continental troops now in the county of Tryon, if joined by some of the militia will be adequate to the business."

Arnold set out immediately for Albany, where he met Colonel Willett, and together they hurried to Fort Dayton, which they reached on August 20. During the following day, he convened a council consisting of Brigadier General Learned; Colonels, Willett; John Bailey, 2d Massachusetts; Cornelius Van Dycke, 1st New York; Henry Beekman Livingston, 4th New York; James Wesson, 9th Massachusetts; and Lt. Col. John Brook; 8th Massachusetts. The official report in the Gates Papers reads:

The general [Arnold] informed the council that previous to his leaving Albany, General Schuyler had sent a belt and a message to the Oneidas to meet at Albany, and intrusted him, General Arnold, to engage as many of them as possible in our service, and had furnished him with presents for them, in consequence of which, he had dispatched a messenger to them, requesting they would meet him at German Flatts; as yesterday they did not arrive he has given orders for the army to march for Fort Schuyler this morning, since which a deputation from the Oneidas

and Tuscaroras had arrived, acquainting him that the chiefs of both Tribes with their families would be here the day after tomorrow, requesting a meeting with us; one of the Oneidas, who had lately been at the enemy's encampment also informed that all the Six Nations, except the two tribes above mentioned, had joined the enemy, the whole with foreign Indians amounting to 1,500 by the enemy's account. The Oneida, who is known to be a fast friend of ours, says that from viewing their encampment he is fully convinced there is upwards of 1,000 Indians, and from the best authority their other forces are near 700, besides some Tories who have joined since their arrival. Colonel Willett, who lately left the fort, being present, is fully of opinion the above account is nearly true. The general then acquainted the council that by the returns delivered this morning, our whole force, rank and file, effectives, are 933, and 13 artillerymen, exclusive of a few militia, the whole not exceeding 100 on whom little dependence can be placed; at the same time requests the opinion of council whether it is prudent to march with the present force and endeavour to raise the siege of Fort Schuyler, or to remain at this place, until reinforcements can be solicited from below, and more of the militia turned out to join us, and until the Oneidas had determined if they would join us, of which they give encouragement.

Resolved, That in the Opinion of this Council, our force is not equal to that of the enemy, and it would be imprudent and putting too much to the hazard to attempt the march to the relief of Fort Schuyler, until the army is reinforced; the council are of the opinion that an express ought immediately to be sent to General Gates, requesting he will immediately send such reinforcements to us as will enable us to march to the relief of the fort, with a probability of succeeding and that in the meantime the army remain at the German Flatts, at least until an answer can be had from General Gates, and that all possible method be taken to persuade the militia and Indians to join us.<sup>81</sup>

Benedict Arnold has a reputation for audacity equaled by few, if any, of his contemporaries, but he approached the relief of Fort Stanwix with uncharacteristic caution. While it was true that the evidence indicated that St. Leger's force outnumbered Arnold's column, the total American strength, including the fort's garrison, gave them a force more than equal to that of their enemy. At the most, St. Leger's white troops numbered 700 to 800 men, of whom approximately 300 were Canadian militia, not the most reliable of troops. The Indians, who may have numbered 800 at this time, were of limited usefulness in a pitched battle; and even that number had been reduced by the fighting at Oriskany. Between Arnold and Gansevoort, the Americans had a maximum of 1,746, of whom all but about 100 were Continentals.<sup>82</sup> St. Leger could not maintain the siege and repel the relief column; and if he abandoned the siege, the garrison would be free to cooperate with Arnold against him. The responsibilities of an independent field command had sobered the flamboyant general who so often made his superiors seem pedestrian when he did not have ultimate responsibility for the conduct of a campaign.

If he was not prepared to rush into battle, he was ready to sound aggressive, so he issued a proclamation:

*By the Hon. BENEDICT ARNOLD, esq. Major-general and Commander in Chief of the army of the United States of America on the Mohawk River Whereas a certain Barry St. Leger a Brigadier-general in the services of the — George of*

Great—Britain, at the head of a banditti of robbers, murderers, and traitors, composed of savages of America, and more savage Britons (among whom is noted Sir John Johnson, John Butler, and Daniel Claus) have lately appeared in the frontiers of this State, and have threatened ruin and destruction to all the inhabitants of the United States. They have also, by artifice and misrepresentation, induced many of the ignorant and unwary subjects of these States, to forfeit their allegiance to the same, and join with them in their crimes, and parties of treachery and parricide.

Humanity to those poor deluded wretches, who are hastening blindfold to destruction, induces me to offer them, and all others concerned whether savages, Germans, Americans or Britons PARDON, provided they do, within ten days from the date hereof, come in and lay down their arms, use for protection, and swear allegiance to the United States of America.

But if still blind to their own interest and safety, they obstinately persist in their wicked courses, determined to draw on themselves the first vengeance of Heaven, and of this exasperated country, they must expect no mercy from either.

B. Arnold, M.G.

Given under my hand, Head Quarters, German Flats, 20th August, 1777.<sup>83</sup>

Willett once again returned eastward to deliver to General Gates the council of war's resolution August 21 along with a request for 1,000 light infantry men.<sup>84</sup>

Without waiting for reinforcements, Arnold resorted to a stratagem that has few parallels in American history and folklore. A Loyalist plot had been uncovered in the vicinity of German Flats, and among the prisoners taken was one of the less prepossessing members of the numerous Schuyler clan, a mentally retarded fellow named Hon Yost Schuyler. He had lived among the Indians, who apparently held him in some awe because of his affliction. He was condemned to death for his part in the plot, but his brother Nickolas and their mother came into Arnold's camp to plead for the life of the unfortunate man. Nickerson's account of how Arnold used him is probably more accurate than most that have come down to us:

Taking Hon Yost's brother as hostage for his good conduct, Arnold told the half-wit that his life would be spared if he would go to St. Leger's camp and frighten the Indians there by playing upon their emotions and especially by exaggerating the numbers of the relieving force. The half-wit, delighted at the chance of saving himself, prepared with considerable cunning for the attempt. In order to represent himself as an escaped prisoner who had been fired upon, he caused several bullet holes to be shot through his clothes. Such were the political relations of the various Iroquois tribes that it was possible for a friendly Oneida in Arnold's camp to offer to follow Hon Yost and confirm his story.

Circumstances admirably set the stage for the half-wit. Rumors of the coming of Arnold. 'The Heep Fighting Chief,' had already disturbed St. Leger's Indians. St. Leger on his side seems to have committed the error of proposing that the red man should again take the lion's share of resisting this new effort at relief as they had

already done against Herkimer. They had refused. In order to persuade them to march at all he had to promise that he would lead them in person and support them with three hundred of his best white troops. Even so the incident had made them still more suspicious of them.

At this moment the half-wit appeared pointing to the holes in his clothes as proof of the story of his escape. When asked Arnold's numbers he looked upward vaguely and pointed to the leaves on the trees. Such a message from one so mysteriously stricken by the Great Spirit was enough to put the Indians in commotion. Brought before St. Leger, Hon Yost repeated his story with a wealth of detail. Arnold with two thousand men, he said, would be upon them within twenty-four hours.

About this time the Oneida appeared, and he too played his part well. On his way through the woods he had met certain other Indians whom he knew and persuaded them to follow him one by one in order to increase the effect of what he proposed to say. His message was that Arnold had no quarrel with St. Leger's Indians, but proposed to attack only the British and Tories. One by one according to their agreement his friends took up the tale. One went so far as to say that a talking bird had warned him that great numbers of hostile warriors were on their way. On top of the existing discouragement among St. Leger's Indians, all this was irresistible. Oriskany had taken all the fight out of them, and now they were determined to go.<sup>85</sup>

St. Leger, Sir John, and the Indian superintendents, Claus and Butler, tried to prevent their allies from overreacting to the tales of Arnold's advance. A council convened, at which the general learned that 200 Indians had already decamped. The chiefs then informed him that if he did not retreat, they would abandon him.<sup>86</sup>

Just how much Hon Yost's story influenced the Indians is debatable. The campaign certainly had not been profitable to the Iroquois, and they had little stomach for either a prolonged siege or another battle. The appearance of the half-demented white man must have seemed very fortuitous. They now had an excellent excuse for doing what they wanted to: abandon the expedition. Daniel Claus put the best face possible on the affair when he wrote:

The Indians finding that our besieging the Fort was of no Effect, our Troops but few, a Reinforcement as was reported of 1500 or 2000 Men with Field pieces, by the way, began to be des[pi]rited & file off by Degrees: The Chiefs advised the Brigr to retreat [to] Oswego and get better Artillery from Niagara & more Men and return & renew the Siege, to which the Brigr agreed and accordingly retreated wch, was on the 22 of Augt.

Everyone knew that the siege would not be renewed—that the expedition was a failure.

The British withdrawal was so precipitant that they left part of their equipment behind. Colbrath described the evacuation from the garrison's prospective:

Augt 22d. This Morning the Enemy bombarded very smartly The Sergeant Major and two privates were wounded. At Noon a Deserter came to us whose

Examination was that the Enemy had news in the Camp that Burgoyne's Army was Entirely Routed and that three Thousand men was Coming up to reinforce us and further that the Enemy was retreating with great precipitation and that he with another was conveying off on Lieut Anderson's Chest when he had made his Escape and that most of their Baggage was gone—upon which the Commanding Officer Ordered all the Cannon bearing on their Works to Fire severall rounds each to see whether they wou'd return it which partly confirmed the Report of the Deserter. Some time after 4 Men came in and reported the same and that they had left part of their Baggage upon which the Col. ordered 50 Men & two waggons under Command of Capt. Jansen to go to their Camps where they killed 2 Indians and took 4 Prisoners one of them was an Indian. After they had Loaded the wagons with what Baggage they cou'd carry they returned but Night Coming on they cou'd not return to fetch what baggage was still left in their Camp. At Night two Men came in one of them was assisting the first Deserter in carrying off Lieut Anderson's chest the other John Yost Schuyler, who informed the Commanding Officer that he was taken prisoner at the German Flatts and confined at Fort Dayton 5 Days That Gener'l Arnold had sent him to General St. Leger commander of the King Troops to inform him that 2000 Continental with 2 Fields Pieces and a great Number of Militia were on their march for this place to Reinforce the Garrison that he informed General St Leger of it and in Consequence of which he Ordered his Troops to strike their Tents and pack up, and further after he had done his Errand he hid himself in the woods till Night and coming across the above Men they came in together, he likewise informed us that near 17 Indians were at Fort Newport quite drunk upon which the Col ordered a party of men under the command of Major Cochran to go and take them who in about an Hour Returned and informed the Colonel he had been there but did not find any and that he went to Wood Creek and found 8 New Batteaus which the Enemy had left behind While they were out the woman that was wounded with a Shell last Night was brought to Bed in our S W Bombproof of a Daughter She and the child are like to do well with the Blessing of God Our Blockade Ended and the Garrison once more at Liberty to walk about and take the free Air we had for 21 Days been Deprived of At 12 o'clock this Night the Commanding Officer sent off 3 of his Regiment to inform General Arnold of the Precipitate retreat of the Enemy A deserter came in who said he just left the Enemy's Cohorns below Wood Creek Bridge

Augt 23d. This Morning the Col sent out a party under the command of Major Cochran to take them, who returned with three prisoners 4 Cohorns and some Baggage and reported there was 17 Batteaus lying there; another party was sent to the Enemy's N. Camp to bring in the rest of the Baggage left by us last Night containing of Ammunition camp equipage and entrenching Tools another party was sent to the Enemy's S E Camp who brought in 15 Waggons a 3-pound field piece Carriage with all its Apparities most of the Waggon Wheels was cut to pieces as were the Wheels of the Carriage Several Scouts were sent out to Day one of whom took a German prisoner who Reported that the Enemy's Indians had when they got about 10 Miles from this Fort fallen on the Scattered Tories, took their Arms from & Stab'd them with their own Bayonets And that for fear of said Indians he and 9 more German Soldiers had took to the woods the rest are not yet

found their Design was not to come to the Fort as Butler and Johnston told them when Orders were given to Retreat, that those who fell into our hands would be Hanged immediately Another Scout proceeded to Canada Creek found a Carriage for a Six pounder & 3 Boxes of Cannon Shott which they brought in This afternoon the Honble Major General Arnold Arrived here with near a 1000 Men They were Saluted with a Discharge of powder from our Mortars formerly the Enemys, and all the Cannon from the Bastions amounting in the whole to 13 Attended with three cheers from the Troops on the Bastions.<sup>87</sup>

Colonel Gansevoort's official report to General Arnold confirmed Colbrath's account, setting the time that he learned of St. Leger's withdrawal at 3:00 p.m.<sup>88</sup>

The impedimenta abandoned by the retreating army included:

4 Royals, 4 2.5 inches diameter, 126 shells for ditto, 3 travelling carriages damaged, 2 damaged limbers for ditto, 135 three-pound round shot, 20 six-pound ditto, 72 three-pound shot flannel cartridges, 4 tin tube boxes, 60 tubes, 11 cannisters, 1 set horse-harness, 1 set of men's ditto, 4 sponges, 3 ladles, 3 wad-hoks, 28 boxes musket balls, 2 powder-horns, 2 lanthorns, 4 handspikes, 3 haversacks, 1 drudging-box, 2 linstocks, 2 port-fires, 1 apron, 1 pair of good limbers, 27 oilcloths, 2 pair cloathes, 1 coil-rope, a large quantity of junk, a quantity of woollen yarn, 17 three-pound boxes of cartridges damaged, 5 six-pound ditto, 2160 good musquet cartridges, a large number of ditto damaged, 30 copper hoops.<sup>89</sup>

General Arnold, at German Flats, had learned of the enemy's attempt to dig approach trenches nearer the fort; and fearful that an attack might carry the place, he decided to move to its relief. An express reached him when he had marched about two miles and informed him of St. Leger's withdrawal. He pushed about 900 men forward in an effort to catch up with the British rear. He reached the fort at 5 p.m., too late to press the pursuit. The next morning, he sent 500 men to continue the chase, but bad weather forced its abandonment, except for a small party that reached Oneida Lake in time to see the last of the British soldiers crossing it in boats.<sup>90</sup> Arnold soon hurried back to the Hudson with Learned's brigade and participated in the decisive Battles of Saratoga.

Barry St. Leger intended to join Burgoyne on the Hudson and redeem the defeat he had suffered on the Mohawk. The distance was too great, and St. Leger did not get to join the main drive against Albany.

The British plan for 1777 went awry on the Hudson with more dramatic and far-reaching results than was the case on the Mohawk. As we have noted, Sir William Howe had proposed shifting his primary threat from New England to Philadelphia.<sup>91</sup> The king and his ministers approved this change in priorities early in March,<sup>92</sup> and he moved against the American capital, leaving Sir Henry Clinton in New York with about 3,000 men to defend the city and act on the lower Hudson. Burgoyne's main army advanced to the northern part of the township of Stillwater, where Gates had blocked the road to Albany. On two days, September 19 and October 7, he fought two engagements, called the Battle of Saratoga, on the American general's terms. Failing to drive or lure the Americans off Bemis Heights, he retreated northward to the village of Saratoga (Schuylerville), where he capitulated to Gates on October 17. The British grand

design for 1777 was wrecked. A strategic and tactical turning point in the war was passed, and a family fight had become an international conflict.<sup>93</sup>

The American victory at Fort Stanwix purchased temporary security for the troubled Mohawk Valley that was shattered each of the remaining years of the war by raids by British regulars and, especially, their Loyalist and Indian auxiliaries. Except for the regulars, the people on both sides were fighting for their home country; and the fighting was often characterized by the mutual savagery of internecine warfare. The Americans retaliated in 1779 with the Sullivan-Clinton campaign that devastated the hostile Iroquois towns but failed to destroy the Indians' ability to fight. Although the tribes suffered severely during the winter of 1779-80, the heaviest of the century, they joined their white allies for even more raids, especially Joseph Brant's and Sir John Johnson's forays of 1780; and the northern frontier was a theatre for destructive but indecisive border war until the end of the Revolution.<sup>94</sup>

Fort Stanwix continued to guard the Great Carrying Place until the spring of 1781. During the fort's final years, the elements and fires worked havoc on its fabric and structures. A fire in April 1780 destroyed the guardhouse and threatened the nearest barracks so seriously that it had to be razed to prevent the fire's spreading.<sup>95</sup> On May 14, 1781, another fire, preceded by a rainstorm, destroyed all the barracks; and the rain did extensive damage to the fort's walls. On May 27, Washington wrote the President of the Continental Congress:

There has been a necessity of abandoning the post at Fort Schuyler and removing the Garrison and Stores to German Flats. The Barracks had been [during] the beginning of the month consumed by fire and the Works so exceedingly damaged by the heavy rain storm that they were rendered indefensible, nor could they be repaired in any reasonable time by the number of Men who can be spared as a Garrison.<sup>96</sup>

The general visited the Great Carrying Place in 1783 and in August directed Marinus Willett, by then a colonel of the New York Levies and Militia, to build one or two blockhouses at the portage between the river and Wood Creek.<sup>97</sup> Apparently three such structures were erected near the site of the colonial Fort Williams near the river landing-place.

In 1784, the United States negotiated one of its first Indian treaties at old Fort Stanwix. The settlement of western lands was one of the new nation's most pressing problems. Efforts to reach a solution produced the Ordinance of 1785, one of the landmarks in American legislative and land policy history. The Ordinance provided for the division of western public lands into townships and sections and for their sale by auction. The minimum price was set at one dollar per acre, and the smallest plot to be sold at auction was one section, 640 acres. These terms effectively barred the frontier farmers from buying government land directly, because they had to attend an auction in the east and because 640 acres at a dollar each exceeded their needs and resources. Thus, the door was opened to speculators, who could purchase the lands and then divide them for sale at a profit and on interest-bearing credit.

While surveys mandated by the Ordinance were started, Congress turned to the next step required to open the West-Indian removal. One of the chapters in that story is the Treaty of Stanwix of 1784, by which the Iroquois surrendered all claims to their old lands in return for a few cheap presents. Altogether, the Indians had few reasons to remember the fort with affection. Yet, there are few historic sites whose story more nearly represent the history of the western frontier. Trade, settlements, war, diplomacy, heroism, cupidity, and suffering each

played a role at the Oneida Carrying Place, as each had throughout the story of the white man's conquest of the frontier.

A decade after the second Treaty of Fort Stanwix was signed, the State of New York erected a blockhouse for housing military stores on the parade of the fort. Still standing in 1815, it disappeared at an unknown date, and the entire fort was leveled by 1830.<sup>98</sup> The history of Fort Stanwix had come to a close.

## Endnotes:

---

<sup>1</sup> C. O. 51 272-74.

<sup>2</sup> C. O. 512812.

<sup>3</sup> John Fortesque *Correspondence of George III*, 6 vols. (London, 1927-28) 11, 44, 56; John Fortesque, *History of the British Army*, 13 vols. (London, 1899-1930), III, 204.

<sup>4</sup> Jane Clark, "The Command of the Canadian Army in 1777," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. X (1928), 133-35; Fortesque, *Correspondence of George III*, 421, 427.

<sup>5</sup> C. O. 5/253 ff; John Burgoyne, "Thoughts for Conducting the War from this Side of Canada," copy in Germain Papers, Wm. L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and in John Burgoyne, *A State of the Expedition* Appendix No. 111.

<sup>6</sup> Canadian Archives, Ottawa, Transcript of Colonial Records, ltr., Burgoyne to Germain, Jan. 1, 1777.

<sup>7</sup> William B. Willcox, ed., *American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns, 1775-82, with an Appendix of Original Documents* (New Haven, 1954), 25, n. 14. Hereafter cited as Clinton, *Narrative*.

<sup>8</sup> Piers Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775-1783* (Cambridge, Mass, 1964), 113.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix X1 for complete text.

<sup>10</sup> Italics added.

<sup>11</sup> C. O. 5/94, 201, ltr., Howe to Germain, January 20, 1777.

<sup>12</sup> E. B. DeFonblanque, *Political and Military Episodes in the Latter Half of the Eighteenth Century Derived from the Life and Correspondence of the Right Hon. John Burgoyne, General, Statesman, Diarist* (London, 1876), 486-7. Italics added.

<sup>13</sup> Italics added.

<sup>14</sup> Germain Papers, William L. Clements Library, Ltr., Germain to Carleton, March 26, 1777; "Colonel Claus' Account of the Battle of Oriskany and the Defeat of St. Leger's Expedition . . . in an Original Letter to William Knox, British Undersecretary of State for the Northern Department, dated at Montreal, October 11, 1777," New York State Library, hereinafter cited as Claus' Account.

<sup>15</sup> Hoffman Nickerson, *The Turning Point of the Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1928), 195, 444, N. B.: The Indians joined the expedition at Oswego.

<sup>16</sup> Claus' Account.

<sup>17</sup> Ensign Spoor's party. *Supra.*, 76.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Public Archives of Canada, Transcripts of Colonial Records, ltr. John Butler to Carleton, July 28, 1777.

<sup>21</sup> Schuyler Papers, ltr., Schuyler to Herkimer, July, 1777.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Schuyler to Herkimer, June 29, 1777.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Schuyler to Gansevoort, June 30, 1777.

<sup>24</sup> Colbrath's Journal, May 28, 1777.

<sup>25</sup> Schuyler Papers. ltr., Gansevoort to Schuyler, July 4, 1777.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr, Schuyler to Herkimer, July 8, 1777

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Schuyler to the Tryon County Committee of Safety, July 10, 1777.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Herkimer to Schuyler, July 15, 1777.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Schuyler to John Barclay et. al., July 18, 1777.

<sup>30</sup> Colbrath's Journal, May 19, 1777.

<sup>31</sup> Gansevoort Papers, New York Public Library, ltr., van Schaick to Gansevoort, July 22, 1777.

- 
- <sup>32</sup> Gansevoort Papers ltr., Gansevoort to van Schaick, July 28; Colbrath's Journal.  
<sup>33</sup> Colbrath's Journal.  
<sup>34</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>35</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>36</sup> Willett's Orderly Book, August 1, 1777.  
<sup>37</sup> Gansevoort Papers, from among the captured British papers, Bird to St. Leger.  
<sup>38</sup> Ibid., St. Leger to Bird.  
<sup>39</sup> Colbrath, Journal Aug. 1, 1777.  
<sup>40</sup> Germain Papers, St. Leger to Germain, August 27, 1777.  
<sup>41</sup> Nickerson, *op. cit.*, 199-200.  
<sup>42</sup> Christopher Ward, *The War of the Revolution* (2 Vols., New York 1952), II, 483.  
<sup>43</sup> Colbrath, Journal, August 3, 1777.  
<sup>44</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>45</sup> Stone, *op. cit.*, 230-31.  
<sup>46</sup> Claus' Account; Colbrath Journal, August 4, 1777.  
<sup>47</sup> Colbrath, Journal, August 5, 1777.  
<sup>48</sup> Claus' Account; Canadian Archives, ltr., St. Leger to Burgoyne, August 11, 1777; *ibid.*, ltr., Butler to Carleton, August 15, 1777; Colbrath, Journal, August 6, 1777; *Remembrancer*, "Extract of a letter from a gentleman at Quebec, dated Sept. 7," 452-3; *ibid.*, "Extract of a letter from Albany, Aug. 18."; *ibid.*, "Extract of letter from a gentleman in Quebec to his friend at Cork, dated Sept. 6, 1777."  
<sup>49</sup> Colbrath, Journal, August 6, 1777.  
<sup>50</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>51</sup> *Remembrancer*, "ltr., Willett to Trumbull, August 11, 1777," 448-49.  
<sup>52</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>53</sup> Ibid; Colbrath, Journal, August 6, 1777; Clinton Papers "Deposition of Adam Hellmer, Albany, August 11, 1777."  
<sup>54</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>55</sup> Burgoyne, *op.cit.*, Appendix, No. XII; Claus' Account.  
<sup>56</sup> Canadian Archives, ltr., St. Leger to Burgoyne, August 11, 1777.  
<sup>57</sup> Colbrath, Journal, August 7, 1777.  
<sup>58</sup> Ibid., August 8, 1777.  
<sup>59</sup> Willett, Narrative.  
<sup>60</sup> Gansevoort Papers, ltr., Bellinger and Frey to {?}  
<sup>61</sup> *Remembrancer*, 1777, *op.cit.*, 450.  
<sup>62</sup> *The Independent Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, Boston, August 28, 1777, Library of Congress.  
<sup>63</sup> Claus Account.  
<sup>64</sup> Colbrath, Journal, August 8, 1777; Willett, Narrative.  
<sup>65</sup> *Remembrancer*, 1777, St. Leger to Ganservoort, August 9, 1777; Gansevoort Papers, 445-46.  
<sup>66</sup> Gansevoort Papers, Gansevoort to St. Leger, August 9, 1777.  
<sup>67</sup> Colbrath, Journal, August 9-16, 1777.  
<sup>68</sup> Burgoyne, *op.cit.*  
<sup>69</sup> See Appendix VIII.  
<sup>70</sup> Colbrath, Journal, August 21 and 22, 1777.  
<sup>71</sup> Ibid., August 21 and 22, 1777.  
<sup>72</sup> Claus Account.  
<sup>73</sup> *Remembrancer*, 1777, 451.  
<sup>74</sup> Claus Account.  
<sup>75</sup> Schuyler Papers, ltrs., Schuyler to Herkimer, August 9, 1777; Schuyler to Tryon Committee of Safety, August 12, 1777; Willett, Narrative.  
<sup>76</sup> Nickerson, *op.cit.*, 211-12.  
<sup>77</sup> Isaac N. Arnold, *Life of Arnold His Patriotism and Treason* (Chicago, 1880), 154.  
<sup>78</sup> Schuyler Papers, Schuyler to Arnold, Stillwater, August 13, 1777.  
<sup>79</sup> Ibid., ltr., Washington to Schuyler, July 24, 1777.  
<sup>80</sup> Ibid., ltr., Schuyler to Washington, August 13, 1777.  
<sup>81</sup> Gates Papers, "Report of Council of War of German Flatts, August 21, 1777." Gates has succeeded Schuyler to command of the Northern Department.

- <sup>82</sup> The size of Gansevoort's garrison is difficult to determine. Two hundred men arrived with Willett, 200 with Badlam, 100 with Mellon. The number that accompanied Gansevoort is unknown, but was at least 200, making a total of 700. This is at odds with a return for provisions for Aug. 13 for 467 soldiers, but except for the contingent that arrived with Gansevoort, the numbers of the other elements are precisely documented.
- <sup>83</sup> *Remembrancer*, 1777, 396-97.
- <sup>84</sup> Gates Papers, ltr., Arnold to Gates, August 21, 1777.
- <sup>85</sup> Nickerson, op.cit., 273-74.
- <sup>86</sup> Claus Account.
- <sup>87</sup> Colbrath, Journal, August 22-23, 1777.
- <sup>88</sup> Gasevoort Papers, ltr., Gansevoort to Arnold, August 22, 1777.
- <sup>89</sup> Gates Papers, "A return to ammunition and artillery stores taken at the camp before Fort Schuyler, August 21st, 1777."
- <sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, ltrs., Arnold to Gates, August 23 and 24, 1777.
- <sup>91</sup> *Supra*, 84.
- <sup>92</sup> C. O. 5/253, 286.
- <sup>93</sup> John F. Luzader, "The Burgoyne Campaign to September 19, 1777," Saratoga National Historical Park, 1958; John F. Luzader, "The Burgoyne Campaign From October 8-October 16, 1777," Saratoga National Historical Park, 1959.
- <sup>94</sup> Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence, Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice, 1763-1789* (New York, 1971), 328-29; Alexander Flick, *The American Revolution in New York* (Albany, 1926), 169; See also, Division of Archives and History, University of the State of New York, *The Sullivan-Clinton Campaign in 1779, Chronology and Selected Documents* (Albany, 1929).
- <sup>95</sup> Files of the Fort Stanwix Museum [Rome Historical Society], Rome, N. Y., ltr., Lt. Col. Cornelius Van Dyke to Col. Goose Van Schaick. April 17, 1780.
- <sup>96</sup> Washington Papers, ltr., Washington to President of the Congress, May 27, 1781.
- <sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, ltr., Washington to Willett, August 4, 1783.
- <sup>98</sup> Orville Carroll, *Historic Structure Report, Architectural Data Section, Fort Stanwix*, (Denver Service Center, National Park Service, 1973), 16-7.

# Appendix

## The "Stars and Stripes" at Fort Stanwix A Summary of the Evidence

by John F. Luzader

### Introduction

The purpose of this brief report is to present the results of a study of the evidence concerning whether the flag flown at Fort Stanwix during the siege of August 1777 was the first "Stars and Stripes" flown in combat. This is not a history of the genesis of the national flag; nor is it an evaluation of the claims put forth in support of the Bennington and Guilford Courthouse flags.

### The Tradition

Briefly stated, the traditional association of the flag that became the national standard with the Siege of Fort Stanwix is that the news of the passage of the "Flag Resolution" by the Continental Congress on June 14 was brought to the fort either in the form of a personal letter to Colonel Peter Gansevoort, the post's commanding officer, or in a newspaper by the bateaux that delivered a 100-man reinforcement from Wesson's Regiment at Fort Dayton under Lieutenant Colonel Mellen. Upon receiving the dramatic and important news, some of the people in the fort prepared a flag of thirteen stripes, alternating red and white, and thirteen stars on a blue field in compliance with congressional resolution. Early in the morning of Sunday, August 3, the first day of the siege, this flag was raised on one of the fort's bastions and a salute was fired, marking the first time the new national emblem was flown over American troops. If true, this was one of the most dramatically important events of the American Revolution.

One of the early champions of this interpretation was Pomeroy Jones, a local student whose interest in the fort had a lasting influence on the work of later scholars. Jones was born several years after the siege; but he knew a number of veterans of the Revolution, and he cited their recollections to the effect that the flag at Fort Stanwix was indeed the "Stars and Stripes."<sup>1</sup> Jones's stories were the basis of a number of 19th century assertions concerning the flag, including Dr. James Weise's account that the new national flag was unfurled, a salute fired, and that an adjutant read the Congress's resolution from the newspaper the batteaux detail had brought to the fort on August 2.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Weise's account was picked up by *The New Larned History*, in which the following appears.

... Journal of Capt. Swartwout of Col. Gansevoort regiment written August 3, 1777 in Ft. Schuyler shows beyond cavil when the first flag of Stars and Stripes of which we have record was made and hoisted, but it was in a fort (Schuyler), not in the field, or at the head of a regiment.<sup>3</sup>

John Albert Scott's popular *Fort Stanwix, (Fort Schuyler) and Oriskany* repeats the story of the newspaper report and the raising of the "first Stars and Stripes."<sup>4</sup> Although Fort Stanwix's claims were frequently disputed in favor of other sites such as Bennington, Cooch's Bridge, Brandywine and Guilford Courthouse, many writers have perpetuated the tradition.

## Evidence

Let us now take a look at the evidence upon which an evaluation of the tradition must be based. The basic document for the origin of the "Stars and Stripes" is the so-called Flag Resolution of June 14, 1777, which reads: "RESOLVED: that the flag of the United States be made of thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field representing a new constellation."<sup>5</sup> The resolution was preceded and followed by matters brought to the Congress's attention by its Marine Committee. Since the resolution was converting the unofficial Grand Union Flag into an official standard, substituting thirteen stars upon a blue field for the canton derived from the British Union, which combined the crosses of Saints George and Andrew, it was appropriate that it emanate from that committee. This was the case because, following British precedent, flying of the Grand Union had been normally limited to ships and permanent land installations. Thus, what Congress was providing for was a new marine flag, not a national military standard.

Crucial to the story of the Fort Stanwix flag is the record of what happened immediately after the passage of the Flag Resolution. Thacher's Military Journal's entry for August 3, 1777, notes that: "It appears by the papers that Congress resolved on 14 June last, that the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white, that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field..."<sup>6</sup> So far as this writer has been able to determine, and this has been supported by the findings of other students, the first public notice of the resolution appeared in the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* on August 30 in the following item: "In Congress, June 14, 1777. Resolved That the FLAG of the United States be THIRTEEN STRIPES alternate red and white; that the union be THIRTEEN STARS white in a blue field. Extract from minutes, CHARLES THOMSON, sec."<sup>7</sup>

Other papers printed the resolution from September 3 to October 2, and the first New York papers to print it were the September 8 issue of the *New York Journal and General Advertiser* and September 11 issue of the *New York Patent and The American Advertiser*.

The papers to which Dr. Thacher at Albany was most likely to have access were the two New York and two Boston papers, the *Gazette* and the *Spy*, in which the story appeared in the September 15 and 18 issues respectively.<sup>8</sup>

There is an obvious conflict in evidence that can only be explained by acknowledging that the doctor may have had access to a newspaper that is unknown to historians or, more likely that when the *Journal* was prepared for publication prior to January 1, 1823, this was one of the instances in which alterations were made in the organization of the original manuscript.

More immediately pertinent to the Fort Stanwix problems are the testimonies of Lt. William Colbrath and Lt. Col. Marinus Willett. In his Journal, Colbrath noted in the entry for August 3: "Early this morning a Continental Flagg made by the officers of Col. Gansevoort's Regiment was hoisted and a cannon levelled at the Enemies Camp was fired on the occasion."<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that the lieutenant called the standard a "Continental Flagg," a term frequently applied to the Grand Union. It is also significant that he did not refer to the flag as a new one, as might be expected if he was witnessing such a memorable event.

Lt. Col. Marinus Willett wrote of the earliest accounts of the siege on August 11 in a letter to Jonathan Trumbull, Jr. He was also probably the author of another account entitled "Extract of a Letter from a Officer of Distinction" that appeared in the August 28 issue of the Boston paper,

*The Independent Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*. In neither of these did he refer to the Fort Stanwix flag, a surprising oversight if it was as historically important as such a "first" would have been. His *Orderly Book* is equally silent on the subject.<sup>10</sup>

A quarter of a century after the siege, Willett wrote his "Narrative," which his son edited and published after the colonel's death. This is what the father wrote concerning the flag:

The Fort had never been supplied with a Flag—The importance of having one on the arrival of the Enemy had set our Ingenuity to work, and a respectable one was formed the white stripes were cut out of ammunition shirts and blue strips out of the Cloak formerly mentioned taken from the Enemy at Peek's-hill. The red stripes out of different pieces of stuff collected from sundry persons. The Flag was sufficiently large and a general Exhilaration of spirits appeared on beholding it Wave the morning after the arrival of the enemy.<sup>11</sup>

When William Willett edited his father's manuscript, he altered the wording of the sentence describing the flag's components to read:

"The white strips were cut out of ammunition shirts, the blue of the cloak taken from the enemy at Peek'sill; while the red stripes were made of different pieces of stuff procured from one or another of the garrison."<sup>12</sup>

Marinus Willett's manuscript had this to say about the cloak from which the blue portion of the flag derived:

What Baggage the enemy had they left it consisting of only a few Blankets and Cloaks—A blue Comblot Cloak taken here afterwards served to enable us to use it for the blue strips of a Flag which was afterwards hoisted during the siege of Fort Schuyler ....<sup>13</sup>

Willett's statement about red, white stripes and blue stripes can only have reference to a Grand Union Flag, because a "Stars and Stripes" would have had a blue field, not blue stripes.

Two powder horns that are purported to date from the historic period at Fort Stanwix have been offered in evidence concerning the flag. I have seen neither of the specimens, my knowledge of them being limited to photographs and written descriptions. At the same time, I would have to say that seeing them probably would not materially increase my knowledge, because in spite of several years of experience in museum work, I would not be able to date them with much precision, beyond noting whether the horns and their lettering conform to types representing a period, or to determine whether the engravings are contemporaneous with the purported date or are more recent additions. I have seen specimens whose provenience has been documented alongside known fakes whose workmanship resembles the authentic so closely that no "expert" could have identified the genuine. Thus I suspect that most other students share my limitations.

One of the horns is rather elaborately carved with a stylized representation of a fort that conforms to the general outlines of Fort Stanwix and bears the inscription "Fort Schuyler; Dec'r 25, 1777, J. McGraw." Flying from the northwest bastion is a flag that, except for the absence of the St. George, resembles the Grand Union. John Albert Scott dismissed the powder horn's

evidence, largely on the basis that John McGraw, whom Scott identified as the man who did the carving, was enrolled in Visscher's regiment of New York levies, which was not posted at the fort in December 1777. However, there was a James McGraw in the 3rd New York, which was there, and this man may have made the powder horn.<sup>14</sup> If the horn is genuine and if John McGraw carved it, the evidence that it presents argues strongly that the Fort Stanwix flag was a copy of the Grand Union.

The other powder horn is attributed to Lt. Christopher Hutton on the Third New York Regiment of the Continental Line. If it is authentic, this specimen is the strongest piece of evidence that I know of in favor of the Stars and Stripes tradition. Several subjects have been carved on the horn's sides. These include: Chris. Hutton 1777; a diagrammatic sketch of Mohawk and Schoharie Rivers; Ft. Schuyler III REGT; Ft. EDW (small and shallow cut), a field cannon with a pyramidal stack of six balls; an Indian armed with a musket and tomahawk; a man mounted on a horse with a caption PETER, and most important to this study—a flag that shows stripes and a field of stars.

Some questions are appropriate concerning the Hutton powder horn. The most obvious is whether it is what it is purported to be. Since there are no conclusive authentications, the question remains moot; although on the basis of design, lettering, and general appearance, I am inclined to accept it as a late 18th century specimen. The second is, what was the designer's objective? Was he using the characters as symbols to interpret the events that occurred at the fort in 1777? If that was his purpose, why was the small legend "Ft Edw.," which must refer to Fort Edward, included? That fort was located at the carrying place on the Hudson River between that river and Wood Creek. Why did the maker locate the flag where he did? It, obviously, was not intended to mark the fort's location in relation to the river. The answer to what his purpose was cannot be found in the characters, even the equestrian figure, who probably was intended to represent the Third's commander, Peter Gansevoort.

On the other hand, the characters may merely be decorative, a form of doodling. But that still does not solve the problem of the flag. And the question of when the carvings were executed remains. Do they date from 1777, or are they later, done after the war as an exercise in nostalgia? There seems to be no satisfactory answer. However, after all the questions have been asked, one must conclude that, whatever its merits, the evidence offered by the horn contradicts that offered by the McGraw specimen, which has as good a claim to authenticity, and more significantly it is at odds with the documentary evidence. Perhaps, we should not afford either horn much credit and rely exclusively upon documentary evidence. Neither horn can really be authenticated in a manner that will satisfy all the canons of evidence. With the documents, we are on safer ground. Their histories can be traced beyond reasonable doubt, and they can be tested by standards of internal and external criticism. So, let us continue to consult them.

As has been noted, the congressional resolution of June 14 concerned a maritime flag and was not intended to provide a national standard for use by troops in the field. This is borne out by subsequent events.

Almost two years after the siege, Richard Peters, Secretary of the Board of War, wrote to General Washington that regimental requisitions for drums and colors had not been filled because "we have not the materials to make either in sufficient numbers." He went on to say concerning the flag:

... as to the Colour, we have refused them for another reason. The Baron Steuben mentioned when he was here that he would settle with your Excellency some Plan as to the Colours. It was intended that every Regiment should have two Colours—one the Standard of the United States, which should be the same throughout the Army, and the other a Regimental Colour which should vary according to the facings of the Regiment. But it is not yet settled what is the Standard of the U. States. If your Excellency will therefore favour us with your Opinion on the Subject we will report to Congress and request them to establish a Standard and as soon as this is done we will endeavour to get materials and order a Number made sufficient for the Army.<sup>15</sup>

Peter's letter makes it so clear as to be obvious that the resolution of June 14 did not authorize a national military standard, that as of May 10, 1779, no such standard had been chosen, and that Congress would be requested to establish one after Washington had expressed his opinion on the matter.

The Board of War continued to consider the design during the summer of 1779, and by September had apparently narrowed its choice to between "one with the Union and Emblem in the middle" and a variant of the marine flag authorized by the 1777 resolution. Between the two, the Board preferred the former.<sup>16</sup>

The matter was not settled by the time fighting ended in 1781, and Congress never supplied the troops with a national color. This does not mean that no variants of the "Star and Stripes" motif appeared on the field. The Bennington and Guilford Courthouse flags may have been carried in those engagements, but they were not the products of Congressional authorization, nor were they copies of a national standard, because none existed. They were local products that used an unofficial design that enjoyed a degree of popularity. But even in those instances, the evidences for their authenticity, while stronger than the Stanwix case, fall short of being conclusive.

It might be argued that the flag flown at Fort Stanwix was, like the Bennington and Guilford ones, an unofficial standard, designed independently of Congressional authority. However, that contradicts Colbrath's identifying it as a "Continental Flagg" and strains Willett's statement that the cloak was the source of the flag's blue stripes, to say nothing of the testimony, for what it is worth, of the McGraw powder-horn.

Negative evidence may be adduced from the absence of any reference to the appearance of a new flag in any of the German or British documents that have been studied. Of course, that omission is not conclusive evidence, but one could expect that at least some member of the besieging force would have been sufficiently impressed by the event to have noted it in some form.<sup>17</sup>

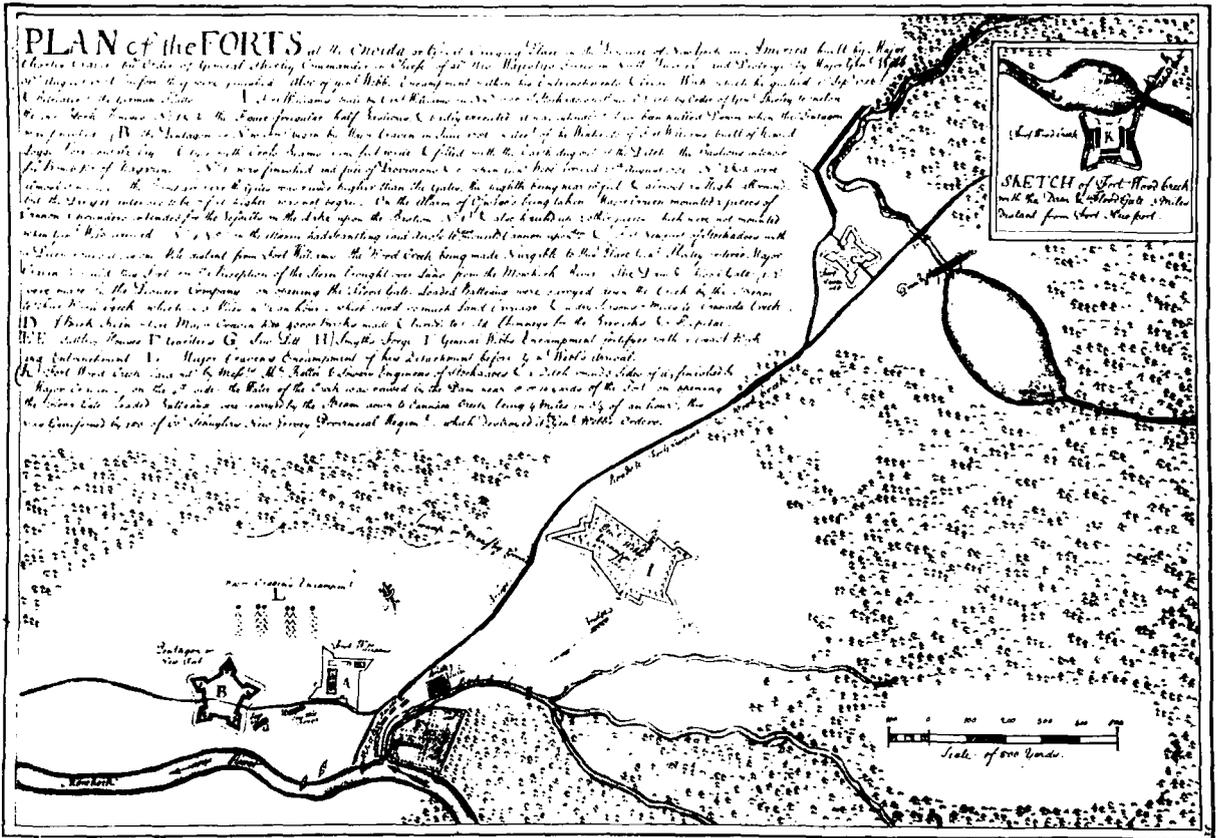
For what it is worth, and that is not much, Lieutenants Digbley and Anburey wrote that the new American flag was flown at Ticonderoga and Fort Anne before the siege of Fort Stanwix took place. Their testimonies in this matter can be dismissed because they compiled their accounts, partly from notes made in the field and partly from other sources, some of which were post-war, sometime after the war.<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusions

On the basis of the documentary evidence, identifying the Fort Stanwix flag as the "first Stars and Stripes to fly over American troops in combat" had its origins in 19th century local tradition; it is not supported by contemporary evidence; such evidence contravenes it; and there is no conclusive evidence identifying the first instance of the flag's use in combat.

## Endnotes:

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Ltr., Oswald. Backus to Captain Gustave Villant, U.S. Army Historical Staff 10 February, 1927, files of the Office of the Chief of Military History, Ft. McNair, Washington, D.C.
- <sup>2</sup> James Weise, *Swartwout Chronicle*(1899), 214.
- <sup>3</sup> *The New Larned History*, 1923 edition, IV, 3109. Swartwout did not leave a journal and his letter to Gansevoort concerning the cloak does not discuss the flag design.
- <sup>4</sup> John Albert Scott, *Fort Stanwix (Fort Schuyler) and Oriskany* (Rome, 1927), 175.
- <sup>5</sup> Journal of the Continental Congress, Monday, June 14, 1777.
- <sup>6</sup> James Thacher, *Military Journal*, (Boston, 1823).
- <sup>7</sup> *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Philadelphia, Vol III, Number 398, 453.
- <sup>8</sup> Milo M. Qualife, Melvin J. Weig, Roy E. Appleman, *The History of the United States Flag* (Philadelphia, 1966), 30.
- <sup>9</sup> William Colbrath, "Journal of the most material occurrences preceeding the Siege of Fort Schuyler (formerly Fort Stanwix) with an account of the siege, etc.," microfilm, New York Public Library.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Remembrances; or, Impartial Repository of Public Events For the Year 1777* (London 1778), 448-49; ltr. Willett to Jonathan Trumbull, Jr., August 11, 1777; *The Independent Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, (Boston), August 28, 1777; Marinus Willett, "Orderly Book," New York Public Library.
- <sup>11</sup> Marinus Willett, "Narrative," MSS., Tomlinson Collection, New York Public Library.
- <sup>12</sup> William Willett, ed., *A Narrative of the Military Actions of Colonel Marinus Willett* (New York, 1831), 132.
- <sup>13</sup> Willett, "Narrative."
- <sup>14</sup> Revolutionary Service Record, John McGraw, National Archives.
- <sup>15</sup> Washington Papers, Library of Congress, ltr., Peters to Washington, May 10, 1779.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, ltr., Peters to Washington, September, 1779.
- <sup>17</sup> "Colonel [Daniel] Claus' Account of the Battle of Oriskany and the Defeat of St. Leger's expedition," New York State Library; Colonial Office Records, Public Records Officer, London; Hessi-Hannan Urkunden and Briefen, copies of Hessi-Hannan documents in possession of Dr. Joachin Lischer, Stadtarchivist, Frankfurt am Main; Hessische Stratsarchiv, Marburg am Lahn.
- <sup>18</sup> William Digby, *Journal*, MSS. British Museum; Thomas Anburey, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of America*. (London, 1789).



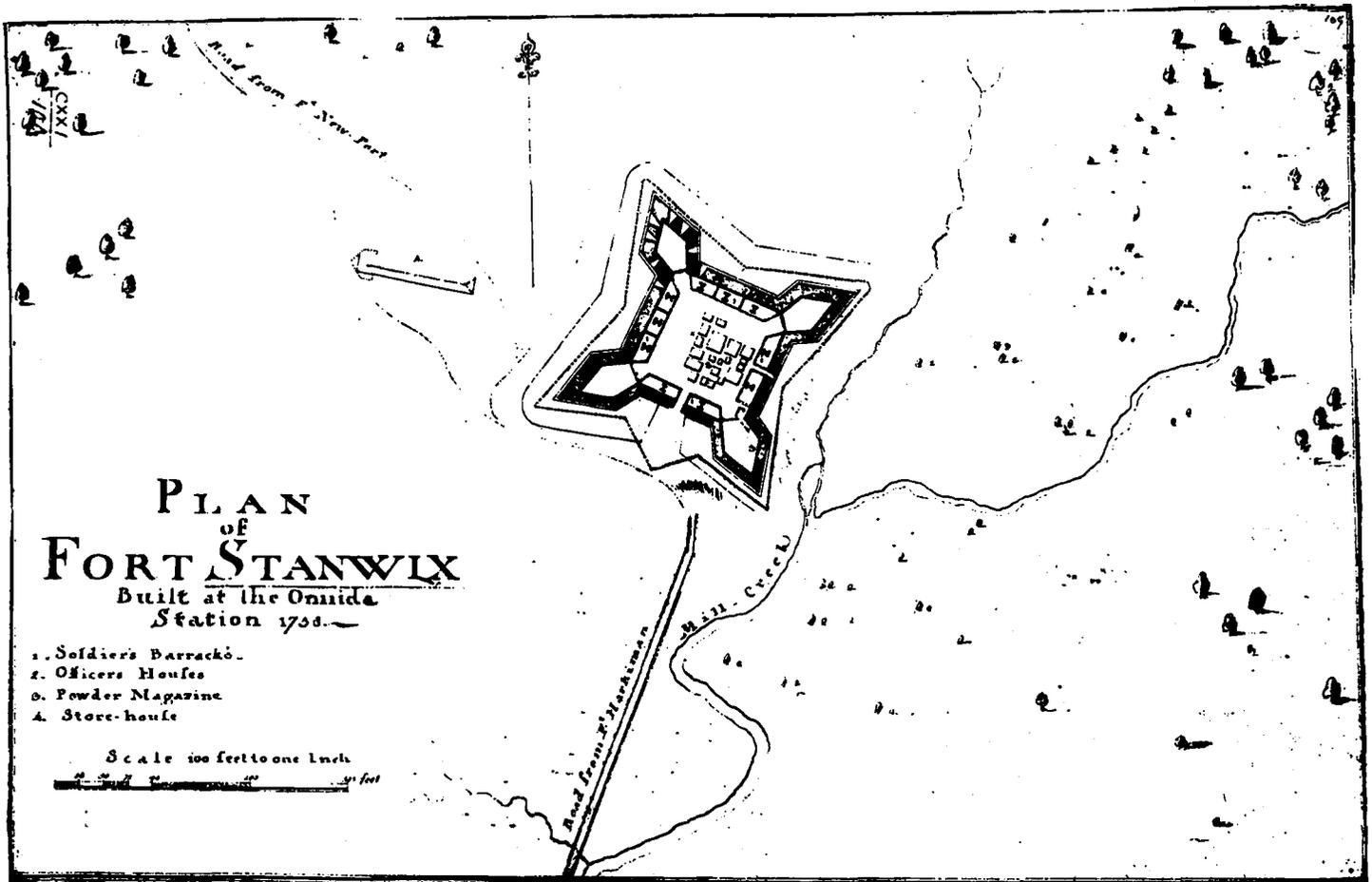
Appendix I: "Plan of Forts at the Onida [sic] or Great Carrying Place," British Museum, Crown Collection, no. XXX. Copy in Map Division, Library of Congress.

Appendix II: "Return of His Majesty's Troops Detached from the Oneida Station—15th August 1758 under the Command of Lieut Colonel Bradstreet." Abercromby Papers, Huntington Library.

*Return of His Majesty's Troops Detached from the Oneida Station 15th August 1758 under the Command of Lieut Colonel Bradstreet*

	Officers						Rank
	Colonel	Major	Captain	Major	Major	Major	
Regiment of Artillery			1	1			22
Regiment of Dragoons			1	1			185
Colonel's Regiment of Foot	1	1	1	1	1	1	398
Colonel's Regiment of Foot	1	1	1	1	1	1	297
Colonel's Regiment of Foot	1	1	1	1	1	1	297
Colonel's Regiment of Foot	1	1	1	1	1	1	266
Company of Grenades							57
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2457</b>

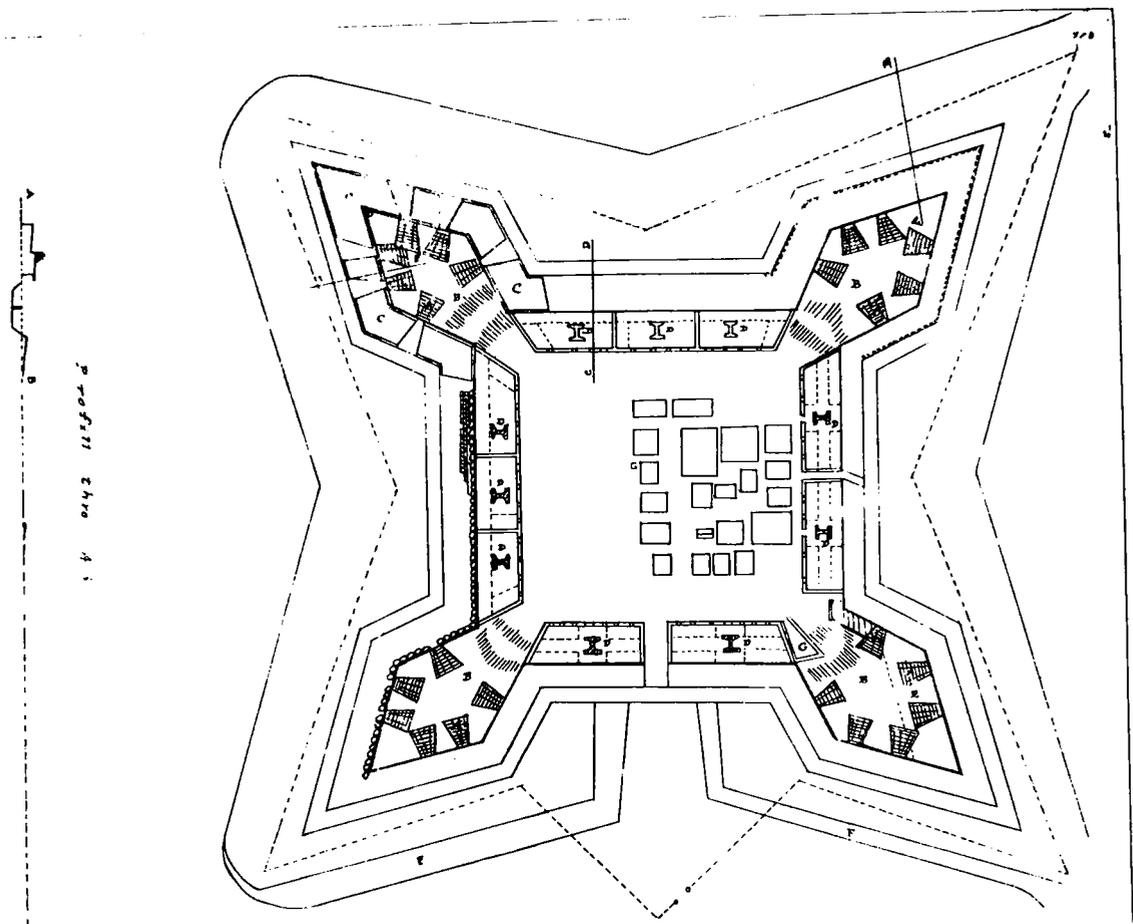
*John Bradstreet*



APPENDIX V

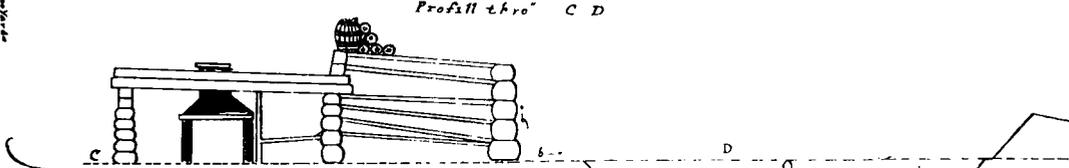
B.M. King's Maps CXXI, 100

"PLAN of FORT STANWIX Built at the Oneida Station 1755." British Museum, Crown Collection CXXI, 100. Copy in Map Division, Library of Congress.

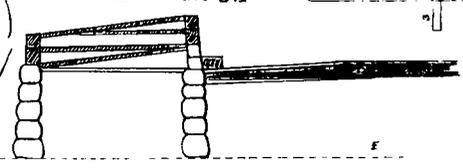


18 0142 11304 d

Profile thro' C D



Profile thro' E.F



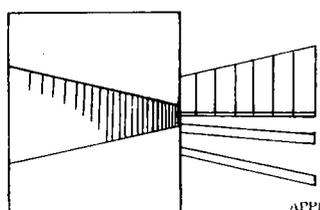
Scale to the Profiles  
20 30 feet

**Plan of Fort Starbuck**  
 Showing what Works were done at that Post from July to December 1759

- A. Half front
- B. Rampart Round
- C. Barricade at the Flag Bastion Round quite Round
- D. Chimneys new made
- E. Floor in the Powder Magazine
- F. the Ditch widened and made to its proper Depth
- G. New Beds made for the Soldiers made the open houses newly covered and Chimneys built with the addition of two Flues

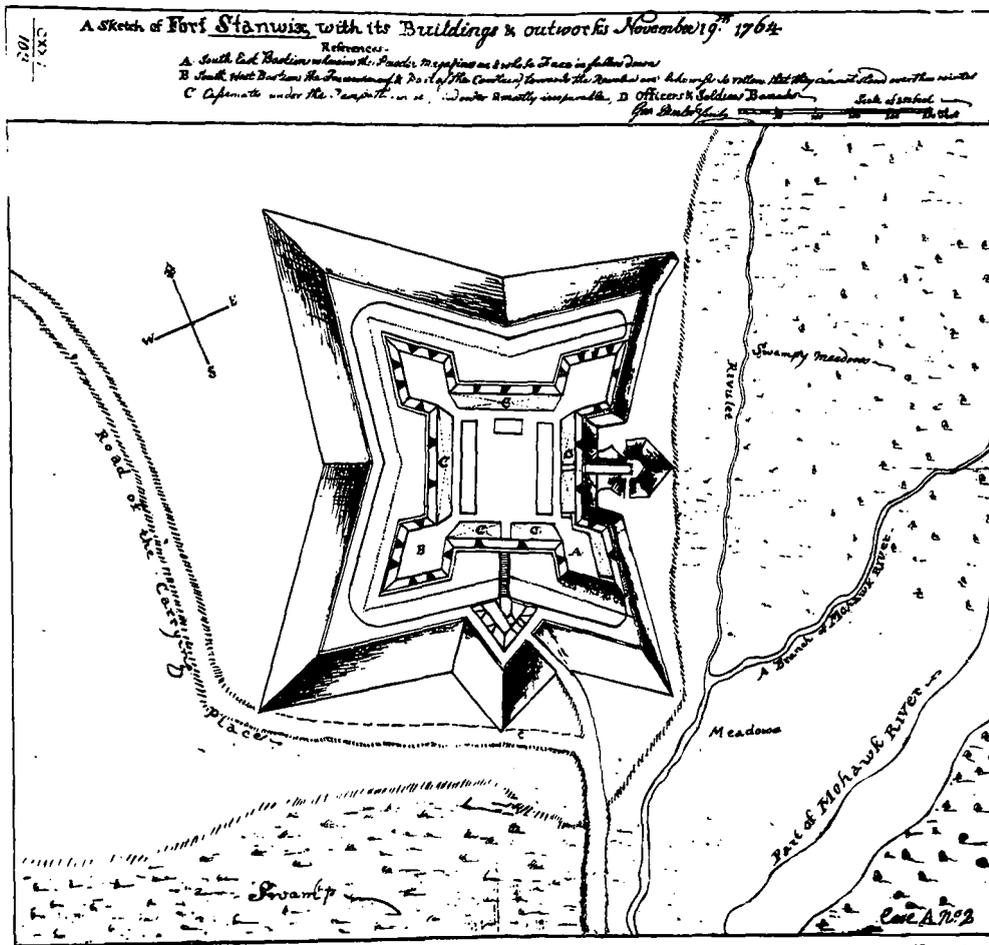
**NO:** the lines drawn in red show what has been New Made, Works done out side of the Fort

Had a great deal work to clear the Channel to the saw Mill, and made a large dam  
 Cleared the Woods about 500 yards round the Fort  
 Made the Road from one landing place to the other, Settled up 12 Waggones and made half wheels to most of em  
 Repaired & Corded all the Batts, that were in bad order  
 Made several Roads, to get the Timber and Sawing Logs out  
 Made a Block house  
 Made a post at Cannade back to contain 50 Men  
 Made a Floll gate at Bulls Foot to raise the R. side to bring the Battery up & Down  
 Made a Colles in one of the Bastions, to put in Garden stuff  
 which is Men hid with

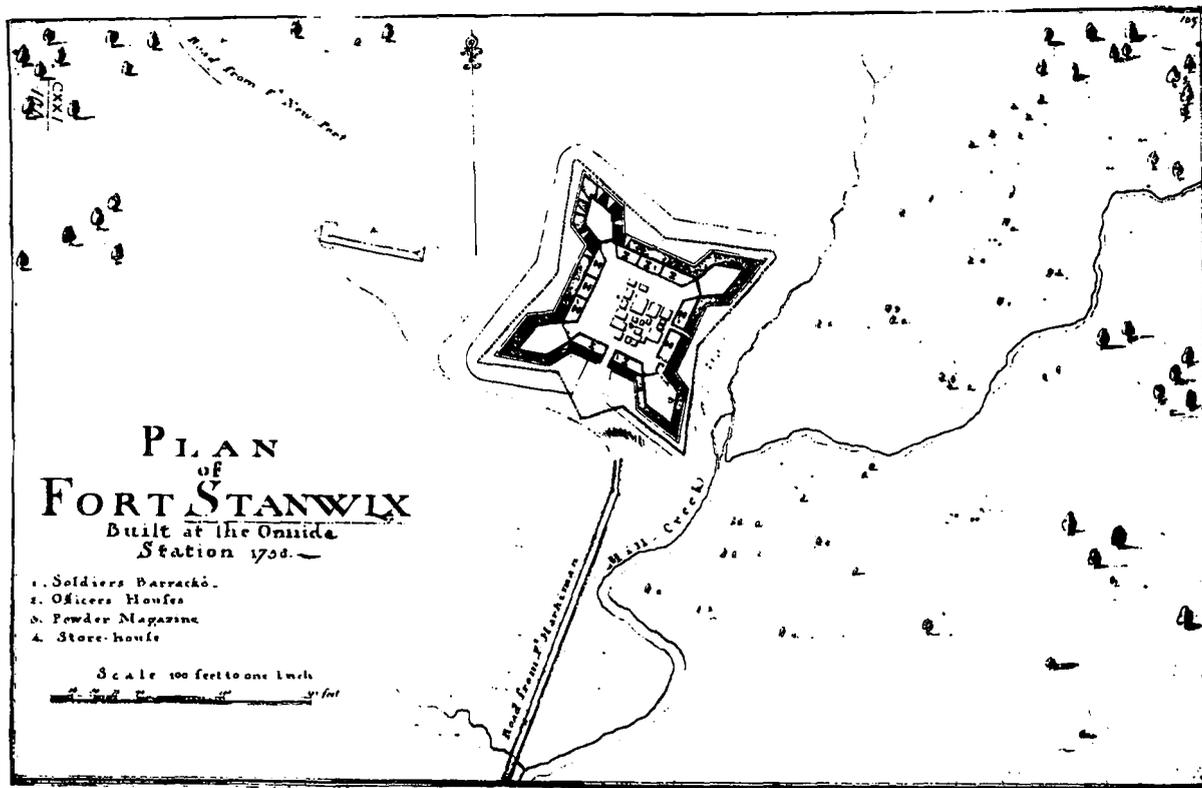


APPENDIX IV

"Plan of FORT STARBUCK showing what Works were done at that Post from July to December 1759," British Museum, Crown Collection CXXI, 101. Copy in Map Division, Library of Congress.

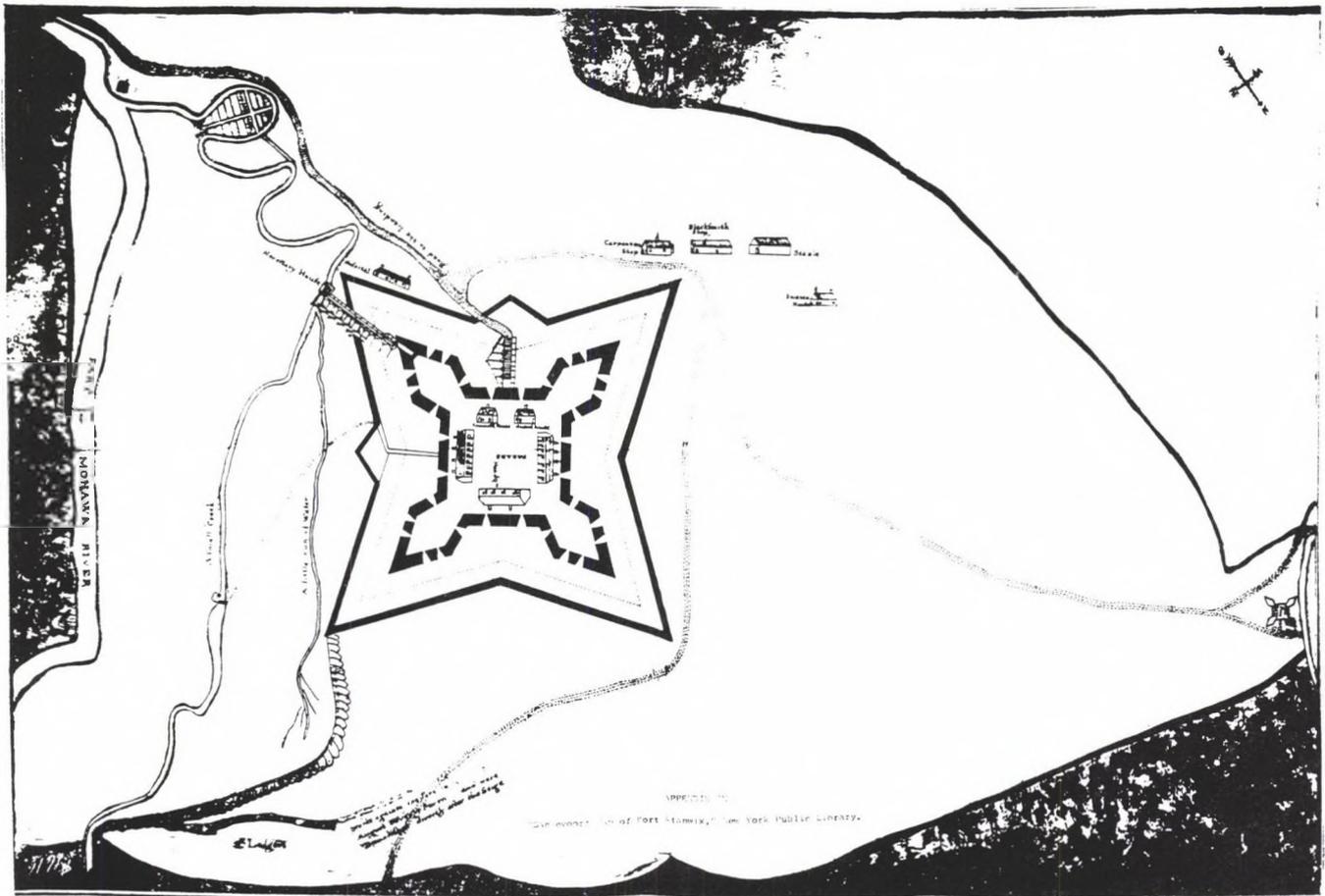


"A Sketch of FORT STANWIX, with its buildings and outworks November 19, 1762." British Museum, Crown Collection CXXI, 103. Copy in Map Division, Library of Congress.



"PLAN of FORT STANWIX Built at the Onondaga Station 1758." British Museum, Crown Collection CXXI, 100. Copy in Map Division, Library of Congress.





Appendix IX: "Gansevoort Map of Fort Stanwix." New York Public Library.

## Other Eastern National Books pertaining to Fort Stanwix National Monument:

*Days of Siege: A Journal of the Siege of Fort Stanwix in 1777*, Edited with commentary by Larry Lowenthal, 1983. ISBN 0-915992-26-4.

This book contains direct excerpts from Lieutenant William Colbrath's journal kept while serving in the Third New York Regiment of the Continental Army during the 21 day British siege of Fort Schuyler (Stanwix) in August of 1777. It was edited with commentary by National Park Service historian, Larry Lowenthal.

*The Making of History: Treaties of Fort Stanwix 1768 & 1784*, 1998. ISBN 1-888213-24-8.

This booklet contains photocopies of the original treaties of 1768 & 1784, courtesy of the National Archives. On the facing pages is a direct translation of the treaty text



### References

- |                |            |
|----------------|------------|
| A. Bird's nest | 1. ... ..  |
| B. Flag-stick  | 2. ... ..  |
| C. ... ..      | 3. ... ..  |
| D. ... ..      | 4. ... ..  |
| E. ... ..      | 5. ... ..  |
| F. ... ..      | 6. ... ..  |
| G. ... ..      | 7. ... ..  |
| H. ... ..      | 8. ... ..  |
| I. ... ..      | 9. ... ..  |
| J. ... ..      | 10. ... .. |
| K. ... ..      | 11. ... .. |
| L. ... ..      | 12. ... .. |
| M. Sally pore  | 13. ... .. |
| N. ... ..      | 14. ... .. |
| O. ... ..      | 15. ... .. |