The Writings of Thomas Jefferson

Vol. XVI

Edited by A. E. Bergh, Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association of the United States, Washington, 1908

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WASHINGTON, May 5, 1808.

To Colonel Louis Cook and Jacob Francis of the St. Regis Indians: -

My Children, -- I take you by the hand, and all the people of St. Regis within the limits of the United States, and I desire to speak to them through you. A great misunderstanding has taken place between the English and the United States, and although we desire to live in peace with all the world and unmolested, yet it is not quite certain whether this difference will end in peace or war. Should war take place, do you, my children, remain at home in peace, taking care of your wives and children. You have no concern in our quarrel, take therefore no part in it. We do not wish you to spill your blood in our battles, We can fight them ourselves. Say the same to your red brethren everywhere, let them remain neutral and quiet, and we will never disturb them. Should the English insist on their taking up the hatchet against us, if they choose rather to break up their settlements and come over to live in peace with us, we will find other settlements for them, and they shall become our children. The red nations who shall remain in peace with the United States, shall forever find them true friends and fathers. Those who commence against them an unprovoked war, must expect their lasting enmity.

My children, I wish you well, and a safe return to your own country.

The Documentary History of the Campaign upon the Niagara Frontier in the Year 1812

Lieut.-Colonel E. Cruickshank, Lundy's Lane Historical Society, 1896

p. 29

(From "The War," New York, 17th October, 1812.)

PLATTSBURG, Oct. 2.

Two chiefs of the Cognawaga Indians arrived at the headquarters of General Bloomfield on Tuesday last. On Wednesday, attended by Colonel Clark of the 11th Regiment, they proceeded on to Greenbush. The *professed* object of their mission is pacific. They were with General Brock at the capture of Detroit.

General Louis of the St. Regis Indians, a firm and undeviating friend of the United States, and his son, have been in this village for several weeks. The St. Regis Indians are disposed to remain neutral in the present contest, but what effect the British influence and British success may have upon them we know not. Indians generally endeavor to keep on the strongest side, but in estimating the strength of the contending parties and their relative ability to harm them, they do not refer to our census as a criterion by which to estimate our strength, the most forcible argument, and the one most sure to carry conviction to their minds is a force sufficient to win the day, and they repair to the standard of the victor as a shelter from danger, without looking to future consequences.

(File in Buffalo Historical Society Library.)

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From Colonel Edward Baynes to Captain Macdonell, Canadian Voyageurs.

Adjutant General's Office,

Montreal, Oct. 16, 1812.

Sir,—I am commanded to inform you that the practical objects which His Excellency the Commander of the Forces has in view in stationing the company of voyageurs under your command in the village of St. Regis are for the security of that post, which affords an easy inlet into the Province, to guard against any predatory incursion on the part of the enemy, to inspire confidence in the Indians of that place and to ensure their good conduct and fidelity.

Under the existing circumstances of the present state of the war it is not desirable to act offensively nor to provoke active hostility on the part of the enemy. It is, nevertheless, of the highest importance to preserve the utmost vigilance and to be at a moment prepared to meet and repel any insult on the part of the enemy.

The peculiar situation of Monsieur de Montigny, captain and resident agent at the village, renders it essentially necessary to the advantageous discharge of his important duties that he should receive every support and countenance from you in order to insure the respect and prompt

obedience of the Indians under his superintendence. His local information, both with respect to the country and its inhabitants, is recommended to your serious attention.

Agents and spies on the part of the American Government have for some time past been clandestinely intriguing with the Indians of St. Regis to seduce them from their allegiance and their artifice has not been without effect. If you can by stratagem, within the Province line, arrest the persons of any of these American agents or others endeavoring to mislead the Indians, you are directed to send them immediately, under a sufficient escort, to Montreal.

(From The War, New York, 14th November, 1812. File in Buffalo Historical Society's Library.)

Official Letters of the Military and Naval Officers of the United States in the War with Great Britain

in the years 1812, 13, 14, and 15

Collected and Arranged by John Brannan, Way & Gideon, Washington City, 1823

p. 86

AFFAIR AT ST. REGIS.

HEAD QUARTERS, CAMP FRENCH MILLS,

October 24th, 1812.

On the 22d I despatched several confidential friends, to reconnoitre about the village of St. Regis; they returned with the information, that the enemy had landed in the village, and that we might expect a visit from them immediately. Their number was stated by no one at less than 110, and from that to 300; the most certain information fixed on the former number.

It was also believed that the enemy were determined to make a stand at that place, and would speedily increase their number: this determined me to make an immediate attempt to take those already landed, before any reinforcement could arrive. I ordered the men to be furnished with two days rations of provisions, with double rations of whiskey; and at 11 at night, we marched with the utmost silence, that we might give as little alarm as possible. We took a circuitous route, through the woods, and arrived at Gray's Mills, at half past 3, P. M. We found here, a boat, a small canoe, and two cribs of boards; captain Lyon's company crossed in the boat; captain M'Neil's, in the canoe, and the remainder, with our horses, crossed on the cribs. We arrived, within half a mile of the village, at 5 o'clock ; where, being concealed from the enemy by a little rise of ground, we halted to reconnoitre, refresh the men, and make disposition for the attack, which was arranged in the following order :—captain Lyon was detached from the right, with orders to take the road, running along the bank of the St. Regis river, with directions to gain the rear of captain Montaigny's house, in which, and Donally's, the enemy were said to be quartered. Captain Dilden was detached to the St. Lawrence, with a view of gaining the route of Donally's house, and also securing the enemy's boats, expected to have been stationed there to prevent their retreat. With the remainder of the force, I moved on in front, and arrived within a hundred and fifty yards of Montaigny's house, when I found by the firing, that captain Lyon was engaged. At the same instant, I discovered a person passing in front, and ordered him to stand ; but not being obeyed, ordered captain Higbie's first platoon to fire, and the poor fellow soon fell; he proved to be the ensign named in the list of killed. The firing was at an end in an instant, and we soon found in our possession 40 prisoners, with their arms, &c.—4 killed—1 wounded mortally ; took 1 stand of colours, 2 batteaux, 38 guns,—40 men.

After searching in vain for further military stores, we recrossed the river at the village, and returned to camp by the nearest route, where we arrived at 11 A. M.—the batteaux, with baggage, &c. Arrived a few minutes before us. We had not a man hurt. I cannot close this letter, without stating to your excellency, that the officers and soldiers, for their conduct on this occasion, deserve the highest encomiums; for so strict was their attention to duty and orders, that

we entered the place without even being heard by the Indians' dogs. The prisoners I have just sent off to Plattsburg, to await the disposition of your excellency.

I have the honour to be, yours, &c.

G. D. YOUNG,

Major, commanding troops at French Mills.

Brig. General Bloomfield

A History of St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties, New York,

from the earliest period to the present time

Franklin B. Hough, A.M., M.D., Little & Co., Albany, 1853

p. 154-158

On the approach of the war, the situation of St. Regis, on the national boundary, placed these people in a peculiar and delicate position. Up to this period, although residing in both governments, they had been as one, and in their internal affairs, were governed by twelve chiefs, who were elected by the tribe, and held their offices for life.

The annuities and presents of both governments were equally divided among them, and in the cultivation of their lands, and the division of the rents and profits arising from leases, they knew no distinction of party.

The war operated with peculiar severity against them, from the terror of Indian massacre, which the recollections and traditions of former wars, had generally inspired the inhabitants.

So great was the terror which these poor people excited, that they could not travel, even where acquainted, without procuring *a pass,* which they were accustomed to obtain from any of the principal inhabitants, whose names were publicly known. A paper, stating that the bearer was a quiet and peaceable Indian, with or without a signature, they were accustomed to solicit, and this they would hold up in sight, when still at a distance, that those who might meet them should not be alarmed. They were likewise accustomed to require persons traveling across their reservation, to have, if strangers, *a pass,* purporting the peaceable nature of their business. The chiefs, it is said, appointed certain persons to grant these passes, among whom was Captain Polley, of Massena Springs. As few of them could read it became necessary to agree upon some emblem by which the signification could be known, and the following device was adopted: If a person were going through to French Mills, a bow was drawn on the paper, but if its bearer was designing to visit St . Regis village, an arrow was added thus.

Thus cut off from their usual means of subsistence, they were reduced to a wretched extremity, to obtain relief from which, Col. Louis repaired to Ogdensburgh, and sent the following letter to Gov. Tompkins:

“I address you these lines, for the purpose of expressing the situation of my nation, and of giving you assurances of our constantly cherishing good will and friendship towards the United States, and of our determination not to intermeddle with the war which has broken out between them and the English, and which has placed us in so critical a situation. Our young men being prevented from hunting, and obtaining a subsistence for their families, are in want of provisions, and I address myself in their behalf to the justice and liberality of the governor of this state, to obtain a supply of beef, pork and flour, to be delivered to us at St. Regis, during the time that we are compelled to give up our accustomed pursuits, which it seems, if continued, would give

alarm to our white brethren. I have come myself to this place, to communicate the distressed situation of our nation to Col. Benedict, who has promised to submit the same to you, and in hopes of soon receiving a favorable answer to my request, I subscribe myself with much attachment, your affectionate brother and friend."

His

(Signed,) LOUIS X COOK,

mark.

One of the chiefs of the nation of the St. Regis Indians, and a Lt. Col. in the service of the United States of America.

In consequence of the foregoing letter, orders were issued that the St. Regis Indians should be supplied with rations during the war at French Mills. They accordingly received during the war, about 500 rations daily, at the hands of Wareham Hastings, the agent for the government.

The Indians, while drawing their rations, begged some for their priest, from the best of motives, which the latter received as a kindness from them; but this circumstance gave him more trouble than it conferred benefit, for it was with the greatest difficulty, that he was able to justify or explain this course, with the British and ecclesiastical authorities. He narrowly escaped imprisonment on suspicion of receiving bribes from the American government. It will be remembered that the priest's house is on the Canadian side of the boundary.

In 1812, it was agreed between a British and an American commissioner, that the natives should remain neutral in the approaching contest.

It is said that in the month of June, Isaac Le Clare, a Frenchman, then and still living at St. Regis, being down at Montreal with a raft of wood, was met by an uncle, who suggested an interview with the governor, which resulted in his receiving a lieutenant's commission, on the recommendation of Col. De Salaberry.

Before his return, the British company stationed at St. Regis, was captured as below stated, and Lieut. Le Clare succeeded to the pay, but not to the rank, of captain, in place of Montigney. He raised a company of about 80 Indian warriors, and crossed to Cornwall. These Indians participated in several engagements during the ensuing war. At the taking of Little York, they were posted at Kingston. At the attack upon Sackett's Harbor, twenty British St. Regis Indians were present under Lieut. St. Germain; and at Ogdensburgh, in Feb., 1813, about thirty of the same, under Capt. Le Clare, crossed to the town. At the battle of Chrysler's field, they were at Cornwall, and prevented by Col. McLean, of the British army, from engaging in the battle.

Chevalier Lorimier, an agent of the British government, in 1813, came up from Montreal with the customary presents to the Indians, and offered them, on condition of their crossing the river and taking up arms against the Americans. They would not do this, and he returned with his presents. This was after Capt. Le Clare had raised his company, or about the time.

During the fall of 1812, Capt. Montigney, with a small company of British troops, in violation to the previous agreement, arrived, and took post at St. Regis. Maj. Guilford Dudley Young, of the Troy militia, stationed at French Mills, receiving an account of this, resolved to surprise, and if possible capture this party; considering himself justified in entering upon neutral ground, as the

enemy had first broken their agreement. He accordingly, about the 1st of October, 1812, proceeded quietly through the woods by an obscure path, guided by Wm. Gray, the Indian interpreter; but on arriving opposite the village of St. Regis, he found it impossible to cross, and was compelled to return.

Having allowed the alarm which his attempt had excited to subside, he resolved to make another descent, before the enemy should be reinforced, and for this purpose he marched a detachment at 11 o'clock at night, on the 21st of October, crossed the St. Regis river at Gray's Mills, (now Hogansburgh,) on a raft of boards, and arrived about 5 o'clock in the morning, within half a mile of the village, without attracting the notice of the enemy. Here the Major made such a judicious disposition of his men, that the enemy were entirely surrounded, and after a few discharges surrendered themselves prisoners, with the loss of five killed, among whom was Captain Rothalte. The fruits of this capture were forty prisoners, with their arms and equipments, and one stand of colors, two bateaux, &c. They returned to French Mills by 11 o'clock the next morning, without the loss of a man, and the prisoners were sent forward to Pittsburgh. Ex-Governor Wm. L. Marcy held a subordinate office in this affair.

This was the first stand of colors taken by the Americans during the war, and these were received at Albany with great ceremony. An account of the reception of the colors is taken from the *Albany Gazette* of Jan. 1813.

"On Thursday the 5th inst., at one o'clock, a detachment of the volunteer militia of Troy, entered this city, with the British colors, taken at St. Regis. The detachment, with two superb eagles in the centre, and the British colors in the rear, paraded to the music of Yankee Doodle and York Fusileers, through Market and State streets to the Capitol, the officers and colors in the centre. The remainder of the vestibule and the grand staircase leading to the hall of justice, and the galleries of the senate and assembly chambers were crowded with spectators. His excellency, the Governor, from illness being absent, his aids, Cols. Lamb and Lush, advanced from the council chamber to receive the standards. Upon which Major Young, in a truly military and gallant style, and with an appropriate address, presented it to the people of New York; to which Col. Lush, on the part of the state, replied in a highly complimentary speech, and the standard was deposited in the council room, amid the loud huzzas of the citizens and military salutes. Subsequently to this achievement Maj. Young was appointed a Colonel in the U. S. army."

This officer was a native of Lebanon, Ct.

"After the war, he entered the patriot service under Gen. Mina, and lost his life in the struggle for Mexican independence, in 1817. The patriots, 269 in number, had possession of a small fort which was invested by a royalist force of 3,500 men. The supplies of provisions and water being cut off, the sufferings of the garrison and women and children in the fort became intolerable; many of the soldiers deserted, so that not more than 150 effective men remained. Col. Young, however, knowing the perfidy of the enemy, determined to defend the fort to the last. After having bravely defeated the enemy in n number of endeavors to carry the fort by storm, Col. Young was killed by a cannon shot from the battery raised against the fort. On the enemy's last retreat, the Colonel, anxious to observe all their movements, fearlessly exposed his person by stepping on a large stone on the ramparts; and while conversing with Dr. Hennessay on the successes of the day and on the dastardly conduct of the enemy, the last shot that was fired from their battery, carried off his head. Col. Young was an officer whom next to Mina, the American part of the division had been accustomed to respect and admire. In every action he had been

conspicuous tor his daring courage and skill. Mina reposed unbounded confidence in him. In the hour of danger he was collected, gave his orders with precision, and sword in hand, was always in the hottest of the combat. Honor and firmness marked all his actions. He was generous in the extreme, and endured privations with a cheerfulness superior to that of any other officer of the division. He has been in the U. S. service as Lieut. Col. of the 29th regiment of infantry. His body was interred by the few Americans who could be spared from duty, with every possible mark of honor and respect, and the general gloom which pervaded the division on this occasion, was the sincerest tribute that could lie offered by them to the memory of their brave chief."

(See Barber's Hist. Coll. and Antiquities of Ct.)

In the affair at St. Regis, the catholic priest was made prisoner, and this surprisal and attack soon after led to a retaliatory visit from the enemy, who captured the company of militia under Capt. Tilden, stationed at French Mills, a short time after. Those who were taken in this affair were mostly the identical troops who had been the aggressors at St. Regis, and for these they were subsequently exchanged.

During the war, considerable quantities of pork, flour and cattle, from the state of New York, it is said, were brought by night to St. Regis, and secretly conveyed across the river for the subsistence of the British army. These supplies were purchased by emmisaries under a variety of pretexts, and by offering the highest prices.

An Indian of the British party at St. Regis, was lately living, who was employed as a secret messenger to carry intelligence, and was very successful in avoiding suspicions and in accomplishing his errands.

It is a well known fact that there were American citizens who secretly countenanced these movements, and who openly denounced the war and its abettors; who hailed a British victory as a national blessing, and who mourned over the success of the American arms, with a pathos that proved their sincerity.

Impartial TRUTH would require their names to be held up to the execration of honest men, through all coming time, but CHARITY bids us pass them unnoticed, that they may perish with their memories.

p. 195-197

On the declaration of war, Colonel Louis, although borne down by the weight of more than seventy years, and passed that time of life, when one would scarcely be expected to encounter the rugged toils of war; yet he felt rising within him the ancient martial spirit which had inspired him in former times, and he felt his age renewed, when he thought on the perils and the victories in which he had participated, and longed again to serve that cause which, in the prime of life, and vigor of youth, he had made his own.

The British early endeavored to secure the St Regis people in their interests, and their agent, who had come up from Montreal, with the customary presents, which that government annually distributed in the payment of their annuities, returned without making the distribution, because they would not agree to take up arms for them.

The residence of Colonel Louis, in consequence of his engaging in the American cause, having become unpleasant, if not unsafe, at St. Regis, he repaired to Plattsburgh, where he spent a

considerable portion of the summer. We notice the following in Niles's Weekly Register, of that period:

Oct. 17, 1812. " Gen. Louis, of the St. Regis Indians, a firm and undeviating friend of the United States, and his son, have been in this village (Plattsburgh), for several weeks. The St. Regis Indians are disposed to remain neutral, in the present contest; but what effect the British influence and British success may have upon them, we know not," &c.

We have noticed, in the foregoing pages, the miserable condition to which the St. Regis people were reduced by the war; as they could scarcely go out of sight of their village, without exciting alarm among the whites, and they had nothing to subsist upon at home.

Colonel Louis represented this condition of things to the governor, who directed, in consequence, that five hundred rations should be delivered daily to them, and they were thus enabled to avoid giving alarm to their white brethren.

During the summer of 1812, he visited General Brown, at Ogdensburgh, where he was received with attention: a new commission was presented him, and through the liberality of Mr. David [Parish], of that place, he was furnished with a new and elegant military dress and equipage, corresponding with the rank which his commissions conferred. On his return to his family, his appearance was so changed, that they did not know him, and his children fled from the proffered caresses of their father, as if he had been the spirit of evil.

His age and infirmities prevented him from active duty, but his *influence* with the Indian tribes, gave him an importance in the army, which was of signal service to the American cause.

On the arrival of General Wilkinson, at French Mills, he joined that army, and accompanied General Brown from thence to Sacketts Harbor, in February, 1814.

In June following, he repaired to Buffalo, with his sons, and several St. Regis warriors, and was present and actively engaged in the several engagements that took place on the Niagara frontier.

In August, 1813, an affair had taken place near Fort George, in which several Caughnawagas and British were taken prisoners; and colonel Louis was induced, from motives of humanity, to undertake a mission to Niagara for their release.

To excite a prejudice against him, some of his enemies wrote to an officer in the American army, that he was on a visit to their camp, on a secret mission, which reaching its destination before his arrival, led to his arrest, and he was held a prisoner eight days, when some officers from Plattsburgh arriving, he was recognized, and set at liberty. A further investigation was desired, and instituted, and he appeared before the commission, and answered, with great modesty, the several questions that were put to him, by the young officers: but the impertinence of some of them aroused his spirit, and he replied: "You see that I am old, and worn out, and you are young, and know little of the service. You seem to doubt what I have been, and what I am now. It is right that you should watch the interests of your country in time of war. My history you can have." He then gave them the names of several prominent officers of the northern frontier, as references, and with a heavy hand, laid a large black pocket book upon the table, and bid them examine its contents. It contained his commissions as lieutenant colonel; general Washington's recommendatory letters, and those of generals Schuyler, Gates, Knox, Mooers, and governor Tompkins, and a parchment certificate of membership, in a military masonic lodge of the revolution.

These abundantly satisfied them, but he further insisted, that they should write to Plattsburgh, which they did, more to gratify him, than to satisfy themselves. The result was, of course, his complete exoneration from any motives but those entirely consistent with honor and principle.

But time was having its work upon the frame of this worthy Indian chief, and an injury which he sustained, by a fall from this horse, at the head of a party of Tuscaroras, in one of the skirmishes of the campaign, was found to have seriously affected him, and he desired to be carried to the Indian settlements, to yield his last advice, and give up his parting breath among the people whose interests he had so long and so faithfully served.

Colonel Biddle, of the 11th regiment, the son of his former old friend, in Coos county, often sent to enquire after his welfare. Louis at length sent for the colonel, who hastened to his wigwam, and found him in a dying condition, but able to speak. He spoke at some length, on the interest he ever felt for the American cause, and the gratification he experienced in being able to die near their camp. He bid him remember him to his family at St. Regis, to colonel Williams, of that place, and to his friends, whom he named, at Plattsburgh.

To his son, he gave his two commissions which he had cherished as a treasure, and bid him carry them to his family at St. Regis, but this worthless fellow on returning pawned them at an inn for grog!

Colonel Louis died in October 1814, and was buried near Buffalo. His death was announced by the discharge of cannon, as was due to his rank in the army.

Battles of the United States by Sea and Land:

Embracing Those of the Revolutionary and Indian Wars, The War of 1812, and the Mexican War; with Important Official Documents.

Volume II. The Indian, French, and Algerine Wars, the War of 1812, and the Mexican War. 1790-1847.

Henry B. Dawson, Johnson, Fry and Company, New York, 1858.

p. 173-175

October 23, 1812.

THE AFFAIR AT ST. REGIS.

"On a beautiful and elevated point which juts into the St. Lawrence, where that river is crossed by the forty-fifth parallel of latitude, and between the mouths of the St. Regis and Racquette rivers, stands a dilapidated and antique-looking village, whose massive and venerable church, with tin-covered spire, whose narrow and filthy streets, and the general appearance of indolence and poverty of its inhabitants, and especially the accents of an unaccustomed language, almost convey to the casual visitor an impression that he is in a foreign land."

Such is the Indian village of *Ak-wis-sas-ne,* or St. Regis—the home of one branch of the Caughnawaga Indians—in the extreme northeastern extremity of the State of New York, and, to some extent, in the neighboring province of Canada East. The peculiar position of the inhabitants induced the belligerent nations, at the opening of the war between the United States and Great Britain, in 1812, to agree with each other that this should be neutral ground, and that the inhabitants should not be employed by either party in the approaching contest. Early in the fall of that year, however, in violation of the provisions of this agreement, Captain McDonnell, with a company of Canadian voyageurs, occupied the village; and attempted to induce the inhabitants to join the British standard. At the same time a detachment of New York militia, mostly from the village of Troy, commanded by Major Guilford D. Young, of that place, was occupying French Mills, on the St. Regis River ;and when the movement of the enemy on St. Regis became known to him he resolved to attack him.

With this object, early in October, Major Young had marched through the woods, under the guidance of William Gray, the interpreter of the Caughnawagas, but when he reached the bank of the river, opposite St. Regis, he found no means for crossing, and was compelled to return.

After remaining at French Mills a few days, in order that the alarm which his former visit had excited might subside, and causing the enemy's position to be reconnoitred by "several confidential friends," he prepared to renew the attempt. For this purpose, at eleven o'clock in the evening of the twenty-second of October, 1812, he moved, with his command, crossing the river in a boat and a canoe, and on a raft of lumber, at Gray's Mills (*Hogansburg, St. Lawrence County, N. Y.*), and reached the outskirts of the village, without attracting the notice of the enemy, at five o'clock the next morning.

Being concealed from the enemy by a small "rise of ground," Major Young halted his troops for the purpose of reconnoitring, of taking refreshments, and of making dispositions for the attack. The enemy was quartered in two houses —one belonging to Captain Montigny, the British agent,

the other to a Mr. Donnelly—and against these Major Young moved with considerable caution and skill. Captain Lyon (editor of the Troy "*Northern Budget"*) and his company were detached from the right, with, orders to march by the road on the bank of the St. Regis River and gain the rear of Captain Montigny's house; while Captain Tilden, with his company, were detached from the left, with orders to move along the bank of the St. Lawrence River, to gain the rear of Mr. Donnelly's house, to secure the enemy's boats, and to cut off his retreat. At the appointed time, Major Young, with Captain Higbie's and McNeil's companies, moved against the front of the enemy's position; and when he had arrived within a hundred and fifty yards of Captain Montigny's house, the fire of Captain Lyon's company, in its rear, indicated that the latter had reached his position and engaged the enemy. At that instant an ensign of the enemy, in attempting to escape from the house, in front, attracted the fire of Captain Higbie's first platoon; when the enemy, finding himself surrounded, surrendered without offering any resistance.

The fruit of this well-conducted little affair was forty prisoners, with their arms, a stand of colors, two batteaux, a quantity of baggage and stores, among which were eight hundred blankets, which had been sent by Sir George Prevost as subsidies to the Indians. Of the Americans, not a man was hurt; of the enemy, Lieutenant Rottotte, Sergeant McGillivray, and six men were killed.

The Americans, after securing the trophies of their victory, recrossed the St. Regis River at the village; and, with their prisoners and spoils, reached the camp at eleven o'clock the same morning.

It is an interesting fact—on which much of the interest which attaches to this affair depends—that the flag which was captured at St. Regis, on this occasion, was the *first flag which had been taken,* by the land-forces of the United States, during the war; and that the captor of that interesting trophy was Lieutenant William L. Marcy, then a young man, residing in Troy, afterwards one of the most accomplished statesmen of his time, and head of the Department of War during the war with Mexico.

{NOTE.—The Dispatch of Maj. Young to Gen. Bloomfield, which had been provided for the illustration of this chapter, has been omitted by the Publishers for want of room.}

Gazetteer of the State of New York:

Embracing a comprehensive view of the geography, geology, and general history of the state, and a complete history and description of every county, city, town, village and locality, with full tables of statistics

John Homer French, R. Pearsall Smith, Syracuse, 1860

p. 308

The earliest settlement in the co. Was made at St. Regis, by a colony of Indians from Caughnawaga, on Lake St. Louis, and from Oswegatchie, under Father Anthony Gordon, a Jesuit, about 1760. They are now known as the St. Regis Indians, and number about 1,000, of whom 420 reside in this co., and the remainder on the N. Side of the national boundary, which passes through the village. During the Revolution a portion of the Indians joined the Americans; and Louis Cook, one of their number, received a colonel's commission from Gen. Washington. In the war of 1812 a part of the tribe joined the British and a part the Americans; and they are thus historically divided into British and American parties. This tribe is gradually increasing in numbers, although, from their filthy habits, they are frequent sufferers from virulent epidemic diseases. They are mostly Catholics,—a Catholic mission being supported among them. A few profess to be Methodists. Two schools are sustained by the State, though they are thinly attended, and apparently of little benefit. The first white settlements were made in Chateaugay in 1796, and in other towns in the two northern ranges in 1800-02, by emigrants from Vermont. At the commencement of the war of 1812 the population of the co. Numbered about 2,500. In 1813-14 it became the seat of important military events, in the abortive attempt to invade Canada. Upon the withdrawal of the troops from French Mills in Feb. 1814, the co. Was overrun by the enemy, who visited Chateaugay, Malone, and Hopkinton, and seized a considerable amount of military stores. In 1832, the cholera appeared at St. Regis, spreading a panic throughout the whole region. Since the completion of the K. &., systematic efforts have been successfully made to bring into market the valuable timber in the central and southern parts of the co.

1812, The War and It's Moral:

A Canadian Chronicle

William F. Coffin, Esq., John Lovell, Montreal, 1864

p. 68-69

On our way back from the Plattsburg-Montreal section of the international frontier, we will touch at the Indian village of St. Regis where the line 45° strikes the St. Lawrence. It is the westernmost, and extreme point of the frontier between Lower Canada and the State of New York. The Upper Province on the north shore of the St. Lawrence and Lakes had been formed into three military divisions—left, centre, and right—the left extending upwards from the old French fort of Coteau du Lac, up the line of the St. Lawrence, included Kingston. The centre embraced York and the Peninsula of Niagara; the right comprehended the Detroit frontier and the Upper coasts of Lake Erie. St. Regis in Lower Canada, on the south shore of the St.Lawrence, opposite to Cornwall, was surprised on the morning of the 23rd October by a force of 400 men detailed from Plattsburg. The outpost or picket, at this point, consisted of twenty men and an officer of Canadian Voyageurs. Lieut. Rototte, Sergeant McGillivray, and six men were killed, the remainder taken prisoners. In a cupboard of the wigwam of the Indian interpreter, was found a Union Jack, on gala days the worthy object of Indian adoration. This windfall was announced to the world as the "capture of a stand of colors," "the first colors taken during the war." Dozens of them might have been obtained, at far less cost, in any American shipyard.

This affront was resented forthwith. On the 23rd November, small parties of the 49th Foot and Glengarry Light Infantry, supported by about 70 men of the Cornwall and Glengarry militia, about 140 in all, under Lieut.-Colonel McMillan, crossed the St. Lawrence and pounced on the American fort at Salmon river, opposite to St. Regis. The enemy took to the block-house, but finding themselves surrounded, surrendered prisoners of war. One captain, two subalterns and forty-one men were taken, with four batteaux and fifty-seven stand of arms. No "stand of colors" was captured with the Americans, as it is not usual to confide standards to the guardianship of detached parties of forty or fifty men in any service.

The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812,

Or Illustrations by Pen and Pencil, of the History, Biography, Scenery, Relics, and Traditions of the Last War for American Independence

Benson J. Lossing, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1869

p. 374-376

Eighteen days after the repulse of the British at Ogdensburg, Major Guilford Dudley Young, and a small detachment of militia, who were chiefly from Troy, New York, performed a gallant exploit at St. Regis, an Indian village lying upon the boundary-line between the United States and Canada. The dusky inhabitants of that settlement were placed in a very embarrassing position when war was declared. Their village lay within the boundaries of both governments, and up to that time the administration of their internal affairs, managed by twelve chiefs, had been nominally independent of both. The annuities and presents from both governments were equally divided among them, and in all matters of business and profits every thing was in common. That this relation should not be disturbed, commissioners, appointed by the two governments, agreed that the Indians should remain neutral, and that the troops of both parties should avoid intrusion of their reservation. But they became objects of suspicion and dread. The settlers in that region had been horrified with tales of Indian massacres remotely and recently, and these people could not pass the boundaries of their domain without being regarded as possible enemies. So vigilant was this general fear that the Indians were compelled, when they went abroad, to carry a pass from some well-known white inhabitant, among the most prominent of whom, appointed by the chiefs, was Captain Polley, late of Massena Springs. {These passes stated that the bearer was a quiet, peaceable person. It was their custom to hold these passes up on approaching a white person that they might not be alarmed. On the other hand, the Indians required persons traveling across their domain to exhibit passes. As few of these Indians could read, a device (see preceding page) was adopted to obviate the difficulties which that deficiency might give rise to. If a person was going through to French Mills, a simple bow was drawn on the paper; if he was intending to visit St. Regis village, an arrow was added to the bow.}

These restrictions curtailed their hunting and fishing, and they were reduced to such great extremities that they were compelled to apply to Governor Tompkins for relief. {The letter written to Tompkins for that purpose was signed by the mark and name of Colonel Lewis Cook, one of the chiefs of the St. Regis Indians, and a colonel in the service of the United States.} The governor listened to their request, and during the war they received about five hundred rations daily from the United States government stores at French Mills, now Fort Covington, on the Salmon River.

The neutrality agreement was violated by Sir George Prevost, the British commander-in-chief in Canada, who placed Captain M'Donell and a party of armed Canadian voyageurs in the village of St. Regis "for the security of that post," to "guard against any predatory incursions of the enemy, to inspire confidence in the Indians," and to give "support and countenance" to "Monsieur de Montigny, captain and resident agent at the village." The real object appears to have been the seduction of the Indians from their neutrality by persuading them to join the British standard. In this they were successful, as the presence of more than eighty St. Regis warriors in the British army at different places on the frontiers subsequently fully proves.

Major Young was stationed at French Mills when M'Donell took post at St. Regis, and he wished to attempt the capture of the whole party at about the 1st of October. William L. Gray, an Indian interpreter, was then running a mill on the site of the present village of Hogansburg, two miles above St. Regis, and consented to be Young's guide. He took him and his command along an unfrequented way, that brought them out suddenly upon the eastern banks of the St. Regis, opposite the village. The stream was too deep to ford, and, having no boats, Major Young was compelled to abandon the project at that time. The British intruders were alarmed; but as day after day wore away without farther molestation, M'Donell settled down into a feeling of absolute security. From that state he was soon aroused. Young left French Mills, with about two hundred men, on the night of the 21st of October, at eleven o'clock, crossed the St. Regis, at Gray's Mills, at half past three in the morning, in a boat and canoe and a hastily-constructed raft, and before dawn arrived within half a mile of St. Regis, where they concealed themselves, while taking some rest and refreshment, behind a gentle hill westward of the village. Having carefully reconnoitred the position, the little party moved in three columns toward the British part of the village, at the northern extremity of which, not far from the ancient and famous church, stood the houses of Montigny and M'Donell, in which the officers and many of the men of the British detachment were stationed. Captain Lyon, editor of the Troy Budget, moved with his company along the road upon the bank of the St. Regis, so as to gain the rear of Montigny's house and a small blockhouse, while Captain Tilden and his company made a detour westward, partly in rear of M'Donell's, for the purpose of reaching the St. Lawrence and securing the boats of the enemy. Major Young, with the companies of Captains Higbie and M'Neil, moved through the village in front. Thus the enemy was surrounded. Lyon was first discovered by the British sentinel and attacked. Young was then within one hundred and fifty yards of Montigny's house. At that instant an ensign of the enemy, attempting to pass in front after being ordered to stand, was shot dead; and a few minutes afterward complete success crowned the enterprise of the gallant major. Forty prisoners (exclusive of the commander and the Catholic priest), with their arms and accoutrements, thirty-eight muskets, two bateaux, a flag, and a quantity of baggage, including eight hundred blankets found at the Indian agent's house, were the fruits of the victory. The British had seven men killed, including a lieutenant, ensign, and sergeant, while the Americans were all unhurt. The late distinguished civilian, William L. Marcy, who was a lieutenant in Lyon's company, and assailed the block-house, was the captor of the flag that waved over it. He bore it in triumph back to French Mills, where Young and his party arrived the same day, at eleven o'clock, with the prisoners and spoils — the latter in the captured bateaux, by way of Salmon River. The prisoners were sent to Bloomfield's head-quarters at Plattsburg. Early in January Major Young and his detachment returned to Troy, and with his own hand presented the British flag – the first trophy of the kind that had ever been taken on land – to the people of the State of New York in the capital at Albany.

Soon after the affair at St. Regis the British retaliated by an expedition to French Mills, which captured the company of Captain Tilden stationed there. Le Clerc also captured Mr. Gray, the interpreter, and sent him to Quebec, where he died in the hospital.

During a brief sojourn at the Massena Springs, on the Racquette River, in the summer of 1855, I visited St.Regis, or *Ak-wis-sas-ne,* the place "where the partridge drums," as the Indians called it. I rode out to Hogansburg, ten miles eastward of Massena, with some friends, over a newly cleared but pleasant country, with the great Wilderness of Northern New York lying on our right, and far in the southeast the blue summits of the Green Mountains bounding the horizon. We dined at Hogansburg in company with the late Rev. Eleazer Williams, the reputed "Lost Prince"

of the house of Bourbon, who was then pastor of a little congregation of Episcopalians, whose place of worship had just been erected in a pleasant pine grove on the borders of that village of two hundred inhabitants. Mr. Williams was connected with the Indians in that region during the War of 1812. He was with Major Young in his first attempt to surprise the British at St. Regis, and was afterward in military service at Plattsburg, in a company of volunteer Rangers. He gave me some useful information concerning the events of the war in that region, and showed me a portrait of himself, painted in water-colors in 1814, in which he appears in military costume, and his features and complexion not exhibiting the least indication of Indian blood. Mr. Williams's biography, written by the Rev. Mr. Hanson, and published under the title of *The Lost Prince,* is a remarkable book. It contains a most strange story.

From Hogansburg we rode up to St. Regis, a poor-looking village situated upon a gently elevated plain at the head of Lake St. Francis, just below the foot of the Long Sault Rapid, on a point between the mouths of the St. Regis and Racquette Rivers. It is surrounded by broad commons, used as a public pasture, with small gardens near the houses. In front of the village, in the St. Lawrence, lie some beautiful and fertile islands, upon which is raised the grain for the subsistence of the villagers; and on the opposite shore of the great river is the Canadian village of Cornwall. We first visited the remains of the cellar of Montigny's house, where Captain M'Donell and some of the British soldiers were captured by Young, at the mouth of the St. Regis. We then called at the house of the parish priest (Father Francis Marcoux), but had not the pleasure of seeing him, he having gone over to Cornwall, his servant said, to attend a horse-race. The gray old church, built of massive stone, its walls five feet thick, its roof covered with shingles and its belfry with glittering tin-plate, stood near. Its portal was invitingly open, and we entered. We found it quite plain in general construction, but the altar and its vicinity were highly ornamented and gilded. Upon the walls hung some rude pictures. Across the end over the entrance was a gallery for the use of strangers. The Indian worshipers usually kneel or sit on the floor during the service. The full liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church was used there, and the preaching was in the Mohawk language. The present church edifice was erected in 1792. The dilapidated spire had lately been taken down, and the belfry was covered with a cupola surmounted by a glittering cross. Near the vestryroom, within the inclosure, was a frame-work on which hung three bells; the two upper ones made of the first one ever heard in St. Regis, mentioned in note 4, page 376. The lower and larger one was cast in Troy in 1852, and had not yet been placed in the tower.

While sketching the old church I was surrounded by the Indian children, all curious to know what I was about; while an old Indian woman stood in the door of a miserable log house near by, looking so intently with mute wonder, apparently, that I think she did not move during the half hour I was engaged with the pencil. The children kept up a continual conversation, intermingled with laughter, all of which came to the ear in sweet, low, musical cadences, like the murmuring of brooks. This is in the British portion of the town.

Just after leaving the church we met the venerable Captain Le Clerc, already mentioned, who had lived in St. Regis fifty-seven years. He accompanied us to the house of Francois Dupuy, one of the two merchants then in St. Regis. Dupuy's store and dwelling were on the forty-fifth parallel of north latitude, which is the dividing-line here between the United States and Canada. That line passed through his house; and while an attendant was preparing some lemonade for us within the dominions of Queen Victoria, we were sitting in the United States, but *in the same room,* waiting to be served. On the margin of the street opposite Dupuy's stood one of the cast-iron obelisks, three feet and a half in height, which are placed at certain intervals along that frontier line as boundary monuments. Upon its four sides were cast appropriate inscriptions, in raised letters.

We left St. Regis toward the evening of a delightful day, and reached Massena just as the guests of the hotel were assembling at the supper-table. At twilight I walked leisurely down to the springs on the margin of the swift-flowing Racquette, and under the pavilion that covers the principal fountain of health I met a venerable old man, who informed me that he was one of the first settlers in that region. He was in the War of 1812 as a soldier, and fought in some of the battles on the Niagara frontier. He was badly wounded at Black Rock by the explosion of a bombshell that came from a battery on the Canadian side. "I was knocked down," he said, "had my breast-bone stove in, and three ribs broken." He was at Fort Erie at the time of the sanguinary sortie, but was unable to walk on account of his wounds. That veteran was Captain John Polley, already mentioned. He was then seventy-two years of age. He had seen all the country around him bloom out of the wilderness, and had outlived most of the companions of his youth.

The History of the County of Huntingdon and of the Seigniories of Chateaugay and Beauharnois

from their first settlement to the year 1838

Robert Sellar, The Canadian Gleaner, Huntingdon, Quebec, 1888

(THE WAR—THE FIRST YEAR.)

p. 61-62

On the first whisper of war, the chiefs of the Indian tribes hastened to Quebec to offer their services, one of them declaring with much pathos, "The Americans are taking our lands from us every day; they have no hearts; they have no pity for us; they want to drive us beyond the setting sun." These Indians were given muskets, organized into bands to act as scouts, and, so far as possible, a white was sent with each band to take control.

On the 12th July the first invasion of Canada took place. Gen. Hull crossed the Detroit river and issued a proclamation in which he declared his confidence as to his success and said he had come to emancipate the people of Canada from the tyranny and oppression of Great Britain and restore them "to the dignified status of freemen." The United Empire Loyalists, who then composed almost the entire population west of Kingston, had a lively remembrance of the wrongs they had suffered at the hands of the United States and flew to arms. Led by Gen. Brock, and supported by a small body of regulars, they attacked Gen. Hull, when the braggart and his whole army surrendered. This discomfiture, followed afterwards by the victory of Queenstown Heights, had the effect of delaying the invasion of Quebec, which was of essential consequence, as it enabled Governor [Sir George] Prevost to complete his arrangements for its defence.

On receiving word of the declaration of war, he issued a proclamation notifying all American citizens, who declined to take the oath of allegiance, to leave the Province by the 14th of July. This proclamation was carried into the settlements of the county of Huntingdon by special messengers, and the news fell like a thunderbolt. Of the Americans, few had any desire to leave. Their mingling with Old Countrymen had rubbed off their absurd prejudices, and it was their intention to become subjects of the Crown. They were assured that they would not be meddled with nor required to bear arms, but a vague panic seized them. They perceived that this Part of the frontier must necessarily be the scene of conflict, while they were filled with terror of the Indians, with whose acts in the Revolutionary War they were acquainted, and the rumor was that a strong body of them were on their way from Caughnawaga to rob and destroy. Their fields gave promise of an unusually abundant harvest, but the Americans would not wait to reap them. Packing what they could of their movables, they fled across the lines. So precipitate was their flight that there were instances where they left bread in the oven....

p. 64-65

The Indians, of whom such apprehensions were entertained, soon appeared, the first band being one of about a hundred braves, commanded by a French-Canadian, Capt. Versailles. Their appearance was terrifying enough, for beyond a girdle they were naked, their bodies and faces streaked with the war paint, and feathers stuck in their hair. Among them was a Flathead Indian,

who had strayed from the Pacific coast, and whose English consisted of “Good George,” “Much war.” They were very civil to the settlers, much more courteous, indeed, than the regular soldiers proved to be, and would touch not even an apple tree without permission. One good woman who regarded a band of them, who came to her house one evening, with terror, had all her apprehensions set at rest when, on looking into the shed where they were to pass the night, she witnessed several on their knees in prayer. They were divided into bands of 40, and were constantly on the move along the frontier from Lake Champlain to St Regis, doing service as scouts and patrols which was simply invaluable, for while they watched the enemy like the hawk, they were as stealthy in their movements and as difficult to catch as the snake. Though the Americans repeatedly endeavored to surprise these Indians bands, and though they were constantly hovering around their lines, it is a curious fact, illustrative of their consummate craft, that not a single Indian was captured during the war. Of the captains in command of them, besides Versailles, there were Lamothe and Perrigo; the latter afterwards married a squaw. When they became acquainted with them, the settlers rather liked to have a visit from an Indian patrol, as it gave them a sense of security. These children of the forest carried their food in small haversacks, and, except when the weather was cold or wet, rarely went near a house save to buy provisions.

On the American side the alarm, on receipt of the news of war being declared, was hardly less than on the Canadian side. The settlers believed that the Indians would be let loose by the British government and, expecting that they would appear at any moment, they became panic-stricken and most of them fled West or into the interior of the country. In some cases so great was their trepidation, that they took none of their effects and even left the tables spread for the meal of which they were about to partake....

p. 68-73

While the first year of the war passed without an encounter on the Hinchinbrook and Hemingford frontier, a gallant affair took place at French Mills, as Fort Covington was then called. Its settlement dates back to 1793, in which year the Indians, at a nominal rent, leased to William Gray a tract of land on the Salmon river, on condition that he would build a sawmill. In 1798 the property passed into the hands of James Robertson of Montreal, who added a gristmill, and both mills were in operation until 1804 when a great freshet swept them away. Mr Robertson at once began to rebuild but died before the mills were finished, when his heirs leased them to the millwright, Robert Buchanan, who had built them. There were three of the Buchanans, Walter and Duncan being the names of the other brothers, and they came from Stirlingshire, Scotland. They were, in many respects, worthy men, and were the founders of the settlement on the Salmon river. No Americans came in until after the beginning of the century, and for a long time the main part of the inhabitants were the half dozen French Canadian families who got work about the sawmill, and from whose presence the name French Mills arose. When war was declared, however, the Americans were largely in the majority and the place had begun to assume the aspect of a village, there being a store or two and at least two taverns. On the Canadian side there were a few settlers, French or American, along the lake-shore and on the Salmon river; with these trifling exceptions Dundee was still a wilderness, and the silence of its woods disturbed alone by the hunter and lumberer. The magnificent timber that fringed the Salmon river was the great attraction, for oaks 5 feet across, and pines unequalled, in quality elsewhere, grew upon the knolls that bordered it.

Dundee was then known as the Indian Lands, and constituted part of the St Regis reservation. The story of the origin of St Regis is romantic. During the interminable wars between the French Canadians and the New Englanders, a raiding party set out in 1676 which penetrated as far as Gorton, Massachusetts. Among the prisoners taken by the Indians were two boys, whom they brought back to Caughnawaga and adopted into their tribe. When they became men the difference in intellect and taste showed itself, and the superiority they affected was resented by the chiefs. The disagreements rose to such a height that they determined on leaving, and, with their wives and children and a few followers, ascended the St Lawrence and raised their wigwams at the mouth of the St Regis river. Half a century later, a Jesuit, Father Gordon, joined them with a body of Mohawks, and he named the village St Regis, after the great French Jesuit, who had not long before been canonized by the Pope. In 1812 the place differed little from what it is to-day, being a collection of mean, dirty shanties with a squalid population. On the breaking out of the war, a division took place, part of the Indians siding with Britain, part with the Americans, and a still larger number remaining neutral. They quarrelled and even fought among themselves as to the respective flags they should follow. Those who cast in their lot for King George, at once enlisted into the bands that were formed for the patrolling of the frontier, so that the village was left entirely at the mercy of the neutrals and of the American partizans. In order to prevent its being occupied, Colonel McGillivray of Glengarry got together and sent over 48 voyageurs—French Canadian canoemen and lumbermen —commanded by captain McDowell. This was on the 16th of October. On the 18th lieutenant Hall learned that the Americans contemplated an assault upon the picket, and advised his captain to withdraw to the small island that lies opposite the village, where they would be safe from surprise. Both he and De Montigny, the interpreter, treated the information and advice with disdain. On the 22nd a loyal Indian came with like information, declaring he had seen the preparations for the attack. His advice to retire to the island was also disregarded. The night that followed was intensely dark and favorable for a surprise, so that the sentinels were on the alert. No cause for alarm occurred and as it drew towards the hour of dawn, their apprehensions grew less. About 5 o'clock the two officers of the guard, lieutenant Hall and ensign Rottot, were seated with sergeant McGillivray around the camp-fire, that blazed in front of the house where the captain and the men not on duty were fast asleep. The subject of conversation of the trio was the danger of their situation, and the ensign had just said: "Is it possible that the obstinacy of our captain exposes us thus to death without profit or glory!" when a volley was suddenly fired from the bush, and he fell dead and the sergeant, mortally wounded. Lieutenant Hall sprang into the house when a second volley was poured forth, which killed a French Canadian private and wounded several others, who had hardly been fairly aroused from their night's sleep. Not a shot was fired by the Canadians, who at once surrendered. One of the missionaries was caught and told to shrive the wounded and bury the dead; the other escaped by hiding in the cellar. The Americans ransacked the houses, among other spoil, plundering a girl of 13 years of age of the box that held her Sunday-clothes and playthings and her savings in pennies, amounting to $3. Worse than that, they stripped the body of ensign Rottot. Satisfied they had left nothing they could carry, the force, which numbered 200 men under command of major Young, marched to French Mills, carrying the paltry spoil they had found and 25 prisoners. From French Mills the party proceeded to Plattsburgh. Among the plunder was a small Union Jack, which they found in a cupboard in the house of the interpreter, and which he was in the custom of hoisting on saints' days and other notable occasions. This, flag Major Young declared to be the stand of colors that belonged to the detachment, and he was sent to Albany with the trophy. His arrival in the capital of the state was made the occasion of a

solemn ceremony. Escorted by all the troops, in the city, and with a band before him playing "Yankee Doodle," he solemnly stalked along the streets of Albany, crowded by cheering multitudes, holding aloft the flag of the Indian interpreter, until the capitol was reached, when, with spread-eagle speeches, it was received from his hands and hung upon its walls as "the first colors captured from the enemy." The major was rewarded with a colonelcy.

On receipt of the news of the declaration of war a blockhouse was ordered by the American authorities to be built at French Mills. The site chosen was less than a mile from the boundary, being the first knoll met with in ascending the Salmon river on its west bank, and commanding an unobstructed view northward and westward and across to the rising ground on the east bank, and close to the road that then connected Malone with St Regis. It was made of elm logs, with loop-holes 10 inches long and 18 inches apart. It was occupied by a volunteer company from Moira, and, owing to many of them having served in the Revolutionary War, modestly assumed the name of "Silver Greys." They were destined to bear the brunt of the act of retribution the British had in store for the devastation of St Regis. Col. McMillan was entrusted with the expedition. He assembled at Cornwall a small but motley force of 250 men. It included a detachment of Royal Artillery and of the 49th regt., companies of the Cornwall and Glengarry militia and 30 Indians from Oka. At 11 o'clock at night of the 22nd November they silently embarked at Glengarry House, rowed across the St Lawrence, and landed at a point where the road from St Regis comes out on the southern bank of the St Lawrence. Here 100 men under Colonel McLean were left to protect the line of communication, and the remainder of the force advanced on French Mills. Though the distance was not great the road was execrable and it was 5 o'clock before the bridge across the Little Salmon was reached, which was crossed without discovery, there being no sentry. About half way to the bridge across the Big Salmon, however, a sentry was met, who tired his musket, to give the alarm. The advance discharged their guns, and the faithful sentinel fell, pierced with 3 balls. A rush was made for the village, and at the end of the bridge another sentry was found posted, who fired at the advancing force and turned to flee, when he also was killed. A few shots from the dwelling-houses, evoked the order to fire a volley, when one man, who stood at the door, fell dead, and resistance ceased. It was now learned that the surprise had not been so complete as anticipated; that scouts had brought in word of their approach 3 hours before, and that the garrison had all withdrawn into the blockhouse, to which the British now marched. Drawing up in front, prepared to storm it, a messenger was sent demanding their surrender, coupled with a threat to destroy the village. The Revolutionary veterans at once marched out and gave up their arms. They comprised 1 captain, 2 subalterns, and 41 men. Besides, 4 batteaux and 57 stand of arms were taken. Col. McMillan returned with deliberation, bearing his spoil and prisoners, to Cornwall, from whence the latter were sent to Montreal, where they were, in the following month, exchanged for the Canadians captured at St Regis. Col. McMillan did not destroy the blockhouse, probably because too green to burn, and to hold it 2 companies were at once detached by the American general from the force at Chateaugay, who stayed there until March, when a Constable company, under Capt. Erwin, took their place.

Historical Sketches of Franklin County and its Several Towns

with Many Short Biographies

Frederick J. Seaver, J. B. Lyon Company, Albany, 1918

(The St. Regis Indian Reservation and the St. Regis Indians)

p. 580-584

So far as I have been able to ascertain, the Indians at St. Regis took no part in the revolutionary war, though two chiefs who later became conspicuous members of the tribe had rather notable records in the struggle. Louis Cook, then a Caughnawaga, acted with the colonists, in whose army he held a lieutenant-colonel's commission; and Thomas Williams, also a Caughnawaga, and the putative father of Eleazer, served with the British. Colonel Louis had great influence with the Indians generally, enabling him to induce many to remain neutral who otherwise would naturally have joined the British, and at Oneida and elsewhere he enlisted bands to scout and fight for the American cause. He had interviews with General Washington, Count de Rochambeau, General Knox, General Schuyler and other men eminent in the colonial army, and appeared before a committee of the Massachusetts Legislature to testify concerning the disposition and probable course of action of the Canadian Indians. The information that he furnished and the services that he rendered, particularly in scouting and as a bearer of dispatches, were deemed invaluable.

Thomas Williams, though it is claimed for him that personally he sympathized with the colonists, accompanied General Burgoyne on his ill-fated march to Bennington and Saratoga, and is represented by his son, Eleazer, to have refused to act as escort to Jane McCrea when she was so foully murdered. Williams joined also in an expedition against Oswego, and was with the party that sacked Royalton, Vermont. He is said to have so conducted himself upon more than one occasion, and to have so led those under his guidance, as to have caused British plans to miscarry, and also to have always stood out against acts of savage bloodthirstiness and cruelty.

The Indians of St. Regis, both the British and the American factions, were supposed to remain inactive and neutral in the war of 1812, but Colonel Louis Cook and Captain Thomas Williams, who had located at St. Regis after the revolutionary war, and had become chiefs of the American tribe, were zealous partisans of the American cause, as also were William Gray and Eleazer Williams. It was Gray who guided Major Young and his command from French Mills (Fort Covington) in 1812, when a British troop at St. Regis was surprised and captured. Though the number of St. Regis followers of these four leaders to the field was inconsiderable, it is not improbable that but for them a larger number would have gone over to the British. Even as it was, a Frenchman named Isaac LeClare, who held a British commission as lieutenant, enlisted eighty of the St. Regis, who participated in a number of engagements. Twenty of them were present at the attack upon Sacket Harbor, and thirty at the attack upon Ogdensburg. Some of them were at the fight at Chrystler's Farm, near Cornwall, but were not permitted to take part in it. At about the same time that LeClare raised his company a British commissioner appeared at St. Regis with presents for the Indians, and sought to persuade them to take up arms in a body. But they declined the proposition.

For a time during the war of 1812, because of the distressful condition of these Indians, by reason of their not daring to leave the reservation to hunt, five hundred rations were issued to them daily from French Mills by the American military authorities.

One other war incident of interest, according to a tradition of the tribe, is that as Sir John Johnston was making his way down the valley of the Raquette in his flight from Central New York to Canada in 1776, the St. Regis Indians sent a body of warriors to meet him, carrying parched corn and sugar to save him and his retainers from starvation.

The number of Indians among the St. Regis who have been outstanding figures, towering above their fellows, are to be counted almost upon the fingers of one hand. One of the earlier Tarbells appears to have been a really great orator. He was known as "Peter the Big Speak," and was usually put forward as spokesman of the tribe in such councils as it held.

Louis Cook was born in 1740 at Saratoga, his father being a negro and the mother an Indian. He himself was decidedly African in appearance. Captured near Saratoga by the French and Indians in 1755, he was claimed by the latter, whom he and his mother accompanied to Caughnawaga. He became a warrior while yet a youth, fought with the French at Ticonderoga in 1756, and with the French at the defeat of Braddock, and later was again at Ticonderoga against Abercrombie. His part in the war of the revolution and in that of 1812 has already been told in these pages. Injured by a fall from his horse during a skirmish in Western New York, he died near Buffalo in 1814. His fidelity was unquestioned, and his judgment was regarded as remarkably clear and unerring in all matters that engaged his interest. He was invariably made one of the deputies to represent the tribe in its affairs with the State, with power to act for it. Thus he was a party to the treaty in 1796 by which the St. Regis reservation was established. Though unable to read or write, he spoke both the French and English languages, and of course the Indian, fluently. He is rated by historians as the ablest man ever connected with the St. Regis tribe.

William Gray was born in Washington county, of white parentage, and was a soldier in the colonial army at the age of seventeen years. He was captured by the British near Whitehall, and taken to Quebec, where he was held a prisoner until the close of the war. Then he located at Caughnawaga for a time, subsequently moving to St. Regis, where he adopted the language and customs of the tribe. He built a mill and engaged in the mercantile business at what is now the site of Hogansburgh, but which was then known as Gray's Mills. His service to the United States in the war of 1812 made him a marked man, so that the British planned and accomplished his capture. He was again taken to Quebec a prisoner of war, and died there in 1814. He was the tribe's chief interpreter, and participated in an important way in negotiating the treaty of 1796 with the State. By consent of the Indians themselves, the Legislature voted him individually a grant of two hundred and fifty-seven acres of land out of the reservation, a part of which grant lay on the Salmon river. Though never a chief in name, his standing and influence with the Indians was yet that of actual leadership and trusted advisor.

Thomas Williams, a chief of the Caughnawagas from 1777 until he removed to St. Regis, and then a chief there, is credited with having possessed unusual intelligence and superior judgment. He was the grandson of Eunice Williams, and the father of Eleazer. For his service in negotiating the treaty of 1796, and because his course in the war of 1812 had cost him the forfeiture of

property that he had owned in Canada. he was apportioned fifty dollars a year out of the State's annuity to the tribe.

A sketch of Eleazer Williams, the greatest Indian orator of his time, and a notable character from whatever angle viewed, forms a separate chapter of this book, but it may here be added that "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country," the application of which in this instance is that on the occasion of a visit to St. Regis recently I asked every Indian that I met in going from Hogansburgh to the church, and also in returning, where Williams's grave was (he is buried near Hogansburgh), and not one seemed even to have ever heard the name!

A publication issued by the Secretary of State places the number of the St. Regis Indians in 1810 at one thousand and forty, which must have included the Canadians, for a special enumeration of the tribe in New York in 1819 listed only four hundred. The next enumeration that I have been able to find, made by Captain James B. Spencer of Fort Covington in 1835, tallies to a man with that of 1819. But between these years epidemics had decimated the tribe, and offset the natural increase. Thus in 1829 small pox swept off considerable numbers, and in 1832 Asiatic cholera caused seventy-eight deaths in eleven days, and typhus or ship fever added fifty-six more. Besides, tuberculosis has always been a scourge to these Indians, fostered by their habits of life, the character of their dwellings, and unsanitary surroundings generally. But in 1855 they had nevertheless increased to four hundred and thirteen, notwithstanding another small pox and cholera epidemic had raged in 1849 and typhus throughout the summer of 1850. Since 1855 no enumeration except that in 1915 has shown a decrease in their numbers. While in some periods the gain was only slight, it was considerable in others.

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On the first of October Major Young led a detachment of five companies from French Mills as far as the east bank of the St. Regis river for an attack upon a British command stationed at St. Regis village, but, because unable to cross the St. Regis river, had to return without having even alarmed the enemy. Three weeks later the movement was repeated, a crossing effected in the vicinity of Hogansburgh, the British troop surprised, four of them killed, and the remainder (about forty men) made prisoners. Major Young reported officially concerning this affair, that it was undertaken because reports had reached him that the British force at St. Regis numbered somewhere between one hundred and three hundred men, with expectation of arrival of considerable reinforcements, and that it contemplated an attack upon French Mills. The troops participating were the Troy companies, and Captain Tilden's, Captain Miller's, and Captain Richardson's, the latter under command of Lieutenant C. McNeil, the captain having resigned because of sickness. The departure from French Mills was at eleven o'clock at night, "with two days' rations of provisions and double rations of whiskey;" the arrival at Gray's Mills (now Hogansburgh) at three-thirty the next morning, and there were found a boat, a small canoe, and "two cribs of boards." Two companies crossed the river in the boat and canoe, and the remainder of the men and the horses on the cribs. At eleven o'clock the same morning the expedition was back at French Mills, the journey both ways, the engagement and the search for stores all having been accomplished in twelve hours. Besides the soldiers captured, two batteaux and thirty-six stands of arms were taken. The Americans did not have a, man hurt, and Major Young's report

pronounced the conduct of both officers and men as deserving “the highest encomiums.” The prisoners were sent to Plattsburgh. William L. Marcy, afterward Governor of the State, was present as a lieutenant in the St. Regis affair, and is credited with having captured a stand of colors, the first taken in the war. Major Young made much of this capture of a standard, having addressed a letter to Governor Tompkins on the subject, reciting the particulars of it, and requesting the privilege of calling upon the Governor and of presenting the colors to him for deposit “in the executive department of the capitol.” The Governor graciously consented in a very complimentary letter, thanking Major Young and his command for “ their faithful and meritorious service.” But if the Canadian version of the capture be credited, it was not much of an exploit. Christie says : “The Americans, in plundering the village, found an ensign or union jack in the house of the resident interpreter, usually hoisted upon a flagstaff at the door of the chief on Sundays and holy days.” Thus the capture would not be the colors of a troop, but only the flag of private or community ownership.

Just one month later a British force of about one hundred and fifty men similarly surprised the American garrison at French Mills, which then consisted only of Captain Tilden’s company—Major Young and the other forces immediately under him having been withdrawn for service elsewhere. Captain Tilden and his men were captured. They were the same force, or a part of it, that had captured St. Regis in October. Fifty-seven stands of arms were also taken. One American, not a soldier (Thomas Fletcher by name) was fired upon by the attacking force, and killed. He had first discharged his own gun from the door of his home, but whether in the air or aimed at the enemy is not known. A more inexcusable act was the shooting of Squire Philemon Berry of Westville, of which no mention is made in any of the histories or in the official reports, but which is well authenticated by family tradition as well as by others still living who had the story from Squire Berry himself. When the alarm of the British approach was given Squire Berry was in a store and his team was hitched under a hotel shed. Running to his rig, Mr. Berry headed the horses toward his home, and himself lay down in the bottom of the sleigh. The rig soon collided with a stump (I think the flight was from Water street up Center) , and Mr. Berry, raising his head to ascertain the cause of the stoppage, was shot. Except that his head was protected by a fur collar and a fur cap, it is thought that the wound must have been fatal. As it was, the bullet hardly more than penetrated the skin, but it rendered him. unconscious. The British left him for dead, and confiscated his team. The bullet was never extracted. One family tradition in explanation of Squire Berry’s presence at French Mills on the day in question is that he had driven there from Westville with a load of supplies for Captain Tilden’s company. There were no other casualties. The prisoners were sent to Montreal, and about two weeks later were exchanged for the British soldiers who had been taken at St. Regis.

Captain Tilden was reproached for his surrender without having made any defense at all, and in some quarters was charged with cowardice because of it. The accusation was, I think, unmerited, and it grieved him sorely to the day of his death, which occurred at Moira in 1834. Whether his course was even an error of judgment is to be doubted. The enemy outnumbered him three to one or more, his only defensive work was a roofless blockhouse, and reinforcements could not reasonably be expected, and the loss of the position was not of great moment, as is shown by the fact that the British evinced no disposition whatever to hold it. Knowing that resistance could carry no hope of a successful issue, but that it would have comprehended the certainty of a useless loss of life, as well as of destruction of property, was it unreasonable in the commandant to deem a surrender the wiser course ?

From a report of Lieutenant-Colonel Alric Man, dated at Constable November 24, 1812, I condense these particulars : At five-thirty o'clock of the preceding morning an express from Captain Tilden reached Colonel Man, advising him that a body of from three hundred to four hundred British and Indians had entered the Salmon river at its mouth, about five miles below French Mills, which place they were on their way to attack. Colonel Man dispatched orders immediately to each of the several captains in Franklin county to assemble their men and march to Captain Tilden's relief, and himself started for French Mills. When he had accomplished half of the distance he was informed of the surrender. Continuing, however, he found upon arrival that Captain Tilden and his ensign were still there, having been permitted, upon their promise to report later at St. Regis, to remain for a few hours to arrange business matters. Captain Tilden then told Colonel Man that before surrendering he had had an interview with the British commandant, and had been shown the hitter's force, which he estimated to number three hundred or more. The British commandant promised that if Captain Tilden surrendered without resistance there should be no violence or depredations, but threatened that if he refused the village should be burned and the block-house carried by assault.

Colonel Man's report described this structure as having been so incomplete that it had been carried up only a single story, and left without a roof or even a door. Colonel Man's report recited further that on his way to French Mills he found the highway thronged with men, unorganized and without leaders, but armed, who had turned out without having been summoned, and, each acting solely upon his own initiative, bound for French Mills to take a hand in repelling the invaders. Three hours later there were two hundred of these men in Captain Tilden's old camp. The enemy remained at French Mills barely three-quarters of an hour.

The Quebec Mercury of December 1, 1812, contained the following dispatch from Montreal under date of November 28th : "On Friday last about fifty American (militia) prisoners, with a captain and ensign, arrived here from Salmon River. They were taken by surprise by Captain Grey's company of the Glengary regiment and a number of militia, &c., from the Raisin River. These prisoners are said to be a part of the party which assisted in taking Captain McDonald's company of voyageurs." The same paper of December 8th had this dispatch, also from Montreal, dated December 5th : "Capt. McDonald and Ensign Hall, of the company taken at St. Regis, arrived in town on Tuesday last. We understand they, with their company, were exchanged for Captain Tilden's company, New York militia, taken at Salmon River, which were to leave here yesterday." The Mercury quotes also from a Troy paper's report of the French Mills affair, which claimed that the British force consisted of three hundred regulars and sixty Indians. The Troy paper stated, further, that the enemy departed "with destroying only the muskets and accoutrements."