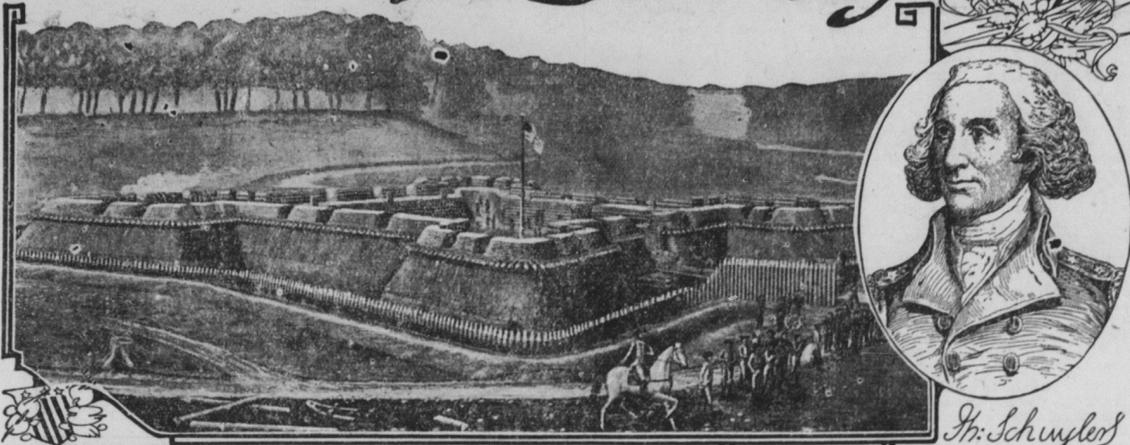


Where "Old Glory" First Faced the Enemy



FORT SCHUYLER, BUILT UPON RUINS OF FORT STANWIX.

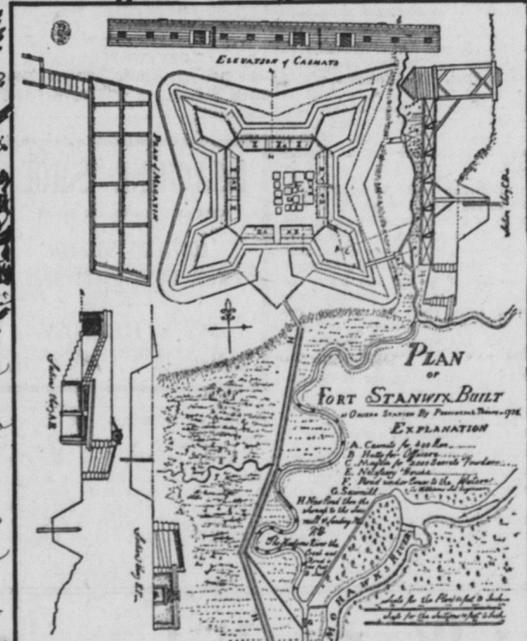


St. Schuyler



GEN. PETER GANSEVOORT

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON



NE hundred and fifty years ago the United States had arrived at a crucial moment in its struggle for independence from the mother country. Despite Washington's brilliant victories at Princeton and Trenton, which had retrieved the earlier disasters in the campaign of 1776 and which had raised the hopes of the patriots for the ultimate success of their cause, the year 1777 opened with the promise that the decisive struggle was yet ahead.

For one thing, the British had realized by this time that in Washington they had to deal with a master strategist and that in the Continental army which he led they were no longer dealing with an "undisciplined rabble of farmers." So the bulldog qualities of the Briton which are brought out best by defeat began to assert themselves and the British ministry began to make adequate preparations for the stern task ahead. The first evidence of Great Britain's determination to strike a telling blow at her rebellious colonies was to plan a campaign which would split the colonies in two and isolate New England, which it looked upon as the head of the rebellion.

The plan, as conceived was a sound one and with every promise of success. The natural line of operation to bring about this split was the route between Lakes Champlain and George and the Hudson river. Gen. John Burgoyne was to start from Canada and come south via Champlain and George while Lord Howe, who then held New York, was to proceed up the Hudson and meet him at Albany. A third force, starting from Canada, was to move from Oswego on Lake Ontario, proceed down the Mohawk river, ravage the rich interior of New York and with the stores thus accumulated supply Burgoyne's and Howe's forces when the three armies met at Albany.

Out on the western frontier, where the city of Rome, N. Y., now stands, there was situated a fort which was destined to play an important part in the breaking up of the British campaign and where one of the most dramatic events of the Revolution was to take place. Originally it was known as Fort Stanwix, built by colonial troops in 1758 as a protection for the western frontier against the French and Indians and named for Gen. John Stanwix, a gallant Irishman, who had served in the French and Indian wars.

After the menace of the French and Indians had been removed, Fort Stanwix was allowed to fall into a state of dilapidation, its wooden buildings and stockade rotted to the ground and its earthworks almost leveled by the elements. Early in 1776 Gen. Philip Schuyler, commander of the American forces in the north, ordered Colonel Dayton to occupy this important place, which guarded the western gateway to the Mohawk valley, and to rebuild the fort. Dayton set about to do this and gave the new fort the name of Fort Schuyler, in honor of his commander.

In the meantime the British expedition which was to sweep through the Mohawk valley was under way. It was commanded by Col. Barry St. Leger, who started at the same time that Burgoyne started south. St. Leger ascended the St. Lawrence, landed at Oswego about the middle of July, 1777, and set out for Fort Schuyler. Meanwhile that post had been garrisoned by troops commanded by Col. Peter Gansevoort, an officer in the New York line, who had served with Arnold and Montgomery before Quebec and who had been ordered there to finish the work of repairing the fort started by Dayton. He was later joined by Col. Marinus Willett, an able officer whose later services were brilliant.

On August 2 Lieut. Col. Mellon, bringing with him 200 men of the Ninth Massachusetts regiment and two batons of provisions, arrived at the fort

to reinforce Gansevoort and Willett. The fort now had a force of about 750 men and on August 3 the post was surrounded by St. Leger's army of some 1,700 British regulars, Tories and Indians. According to the tradition which is now generally accepted, with Mellon's supplies came the news that on June 14, 1777, the Second Continental congress had adopted a resolution whereby the flag of the United States was to be composed of thirteen alternate red and white stripes and a blue field upon which appeared 13 stars. Upon his arrival St. Leger had sent a formal demand to Gansevoort for the surrender of the post. The reply was an emphatic refusal and to add point to the refusal a new flag which had been hastily contrived was run up to the top of the mast and a cannon that had been leveled at the enemy's camp was fired. This flag is described in Colonel Willett's diary as follows: "The necessity of having a flag had, upon the arrival of the enemy, taxed the invention of the garrison a little, and a decent one was soon contrived. The white stripes were cut out of an ammunition shirt, the blue out of the camel cloak taken from the enemy at Peekskill, while the red stripes were made of different pieces of stuff procured from one and another of the garrison."

But this historic event is only one of the several which took place at Fort Schuyler, or Fort Stanwix, as it is so often called. At the approach of St. Leger, General Schuyler had called out the Tryon county militia under the command of the veteran Gen. Nicholas Herkimer, who with an army of some 800 men was on the way to Fort Schuyler. Near Oriskany creek, eight miles from the fort, Herkimer halted and sent messengers to Gansevoort, requesting him to fire three guns immediately upon their arrival. Gansevoort was then to make a sortie against the enemy and Herkimer would advance and try to break through the enemy to join him and thus raise the siege. The plan was an excellent one, but unfortunately it was upset by the impatience of the militia, and especially some of Herkimer's officers, who demanded to be led against the enemy at once. The general pleaded with them in vain to wait until the guns of Fort Schuyler announced that Gansevoort would support their movement. But they insisted on rushing forward to their own destruction for they fell into an ambushade pre-

The author of this article, Elmo Scott Watson, is a well-known writer on the history of the United States, particularly that of the American frontier, and he has made a special study of the thrilling and romantic Revolutionary war period in the famous Mohawk valley of New York. In preparing this article, which deals with an incident in that period, he has drawn upon the most authentic sources of information available in order to present here an accurate account of the events recorded. Read it and you can tell your children on Flag day the story of the historic occasion, "When Old Glory First Faced the Enemy," an army of British and Indians on August day 150 years ago on the old New York frontier.



Elmo Scott Watson, Author of "When Old Glory First Faced the Enemy."

pared by a large party of Tories and Indians, and half of their number was slain in the fierce little Battle of Oriskany.

In the midst of the battle Herkimer's messengers reached Gansevoort, who had heard the distant firing and then realized for the first time what it meant. He immediately dispatched a force of 250 picked men under Willett, who fell upon St. Leger's camp, stamped a part of his force with heavy losses, captured twenty wagon loads of plunder, five British flags and returned to the fort without losing a man. These flags were hoisted on the flagstaff of Fort Schuyler under the new flag as a further gesture of defiance to the enemy. It was more than that—for it was also a prophecy of the ultimate triumph of the cause for which that flag stood.

St. Leger continued the siege, but could accomplish little against the stout defense of Gansevoort and Willett. Colonel Willett had volunteered for the duty of making his way through the enemy lines and carrying news of the fort's condition to Schuyler. That general immediately dispatched Brig. Gen. Benedict Arnold with a force of 1,200 men to raise the siege. By this time the Indians, dismayed by their losses at Oriskany (for St. Leger's allies had suffered as heavily in that engagement as had Herkimer's men) and frightened at the reports of the strength of Arnold's force, which was moving against them, got out of hand and finally deserted St. Leger in a body. That commander realized that he was up against a hopeless proposition. So he raised the siege of Fort Schuyler and retreated precipitately.

So Fort Schuyler is more than a landmark where Old Glory first flew in the face of the enemy. It was the first American victory in the decisive campaign of the war. St. Leger's failure was the first blow struck at the success of the British plan. The second came at Bennington, Vt., on August 16 when Gen. John Stark and his Green Mountain Boys won their victory over the Hessians whom Burgoyne had sent to that place to capture a store of supplies. By this time Burgoyne was in a predicament. The British ministry, after laying its ambitious plan, by some strange blindness to the necessity of assuring absolute cooperation of all units in it, had failed to notify Howe of his part. So he did nothing while Burgoyne hoped in vain for help from that quarter. Fate held in store for Burgoyne Saratoga and surrender!

This year marks the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of those stirring events which made world history. New York is planning to celebrate their anniversary with sesquicentennial celebrations which will have nation-wide interest because they were events of vital importance to the whole nation. No doubt the most important of those celebrations will be the one which will be held near Saratoga on the anniversary of Burgoyne's surrender. But on August 3 there will be one which will commemorate one of the most dramatic events in all American history. It will take place where Fort Schuyler once stood and it will commemorate the day on which Old Glory first faced the enemy. So Flag day this year has a particular significance, not only because June 14 marks the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Stars and Stripes as our national emblem, but because it foreshadows the anniversary some six weeks later of the day when Americans first fought in defense of that emblem and the principles for which it stands.

LIFE'S LITTLE JESTS

MISFORTUNE

Tramp (trying to arouse sympathy)—I was in the San Francisco earthquake.
Hardbodied Business Man—Well—what of that?
"I was shot up in the World war."
"So was I."
"I was run over by an automobile."
"That so?"
"And I've had to live with my mother-in-law ever since I was married."
"Great heavens! I should say you have met with misfortune! What can I do for you?"—Illinois Farmer.

Too Hot-Headed

Critic—You have made your hero too hot-headed, I'm afraid.
Budding Author—How do you mean?
"Well, he has a lantern jaw to begin with. And so his whole face lit up! His cheeks flamed, he gave a burning glance, and then, blazing with wrath and boiling with rage, he administered a scorching rebuke."

AT THE SIDE SHOW



Visitor—You say it's perfectly natural for you to eat glass?
Glass-Eater—Sure—I got a bottle every time I was hungry when I was a kid.

Hymn of Hate

A guy I hate
Is Peter Lumm.
Who howls at ump:
"Kill that big bum!"

Going a Little Too Far

Bridesmaid—How did your husband's friends treat you?
Bride—Terribly! Why, they threw rice all over us!
Bridesmaid—But that's quite the usual thing, isn't it?
Bride—Yes, but this rice had already been cooked.

Embarrassing Ignorance

Griggs—You didn't seem to enjoy your wife's musical.
Briggs—No; I got confused, as usual. I never can remember that a cell isn't something you eat and a meringue isn't something you play.

SOFT JOB



"What does he do?"
"He's employed as traveling companion to Reggie Sapp."
"Soft job."

Time

"Well, well, you're up early."
Said her dad to Catherine—
"Early nothing," said the daughter,
"Pa, I'm only getting in."

She Knew

"If I stole fifty kisses from you, what kind of larceny would it be?" asked the young man.
"I should call it grand," sighed the sweet young thing, without a quiver of an eyelash.

Confirmation

Mr. Mee—My wife says I'm a worm.
His Friend—Why do you stand it?
Mee—Why, if I turned she'd say that proved it.

His Opinion

"Do you know," she said, "you are the very first man to kiss me?"
"Then you must have taken a correspondence course," he answered.
"You certainly don't seem like a beginner."—Pearson's Weekly.

Knew What Was Coming

He—There now, what do you think of it?
She—Well, to tell you the truth—
He—That's right! Be as nasty as you can!—Stray Stories.



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