

# Col. Butler Was First Commander During The Yankee-Pennamite War

William H. Zeirdt Tells About Regiment's Baptism Of Fire More Than 165 Years Ago

(Continued from Page 1)

General Assembly and commissioned by the Governor. The chief commissioned officer of each company was empowered to designate the "days of training and trooping"—three days warning to the men to be given through the clerk of the company. It was provided that the training days should be "in some or either of the months of March, April, May, September, October and November of each year." The law also required that "every centinel shall appear compleat in his arms on every such day; and every person liable to train, having been duly warned and not appearing and attending the same, shall pay a fine of three shillings—except he make within twelve days a satisfactory excuse to the commanding officer." The annual inspection of arms and ammunition was required to be held on the first Monday in May.

Some of our officers had prior service in the French and Indian wars and it is more than probable that they made efforts during the summer and fall to perfect themselves and their men in military exercise and discipline. Each officer and man furnished his own arms and accoutrements. The men were not uniformed, and it is doubtful if more than a very few of the chief officers possessed uniforms. Each of the officers, however, wore some distinctive badge of rank—as, for example, a cockade or sash. For some years prior to the Revolution, and during the first year of the war, none of the militia organizations in the Colonies were uniformed, except those companies which were located in the principal towns and cities.

There were Pennsylvanians who contested the right of the Connecticut Yankees to settle in the Wyoming Valley and historians refer to these conflicts as the Pennamite Wars. Late in 1775 Pennsylvania land claimants, eager to strike a decisive blow at the Yankee settlements, carefully planned and organized an expedition under the command of Colonel William Plunket, who purposed conquering and subjugating the men of Wyoming without delay. Some 600 or 700 well-armed and equipped men were soon embodied at Fort Augusta, now Sunbury; and in order that the proposed expedition might have imparted to it a civil, rather than a military character, this small army was denominated the "posse comitatus of Northumberland". It was to be accompanied on its march by the Sheriff of Northumberland County—within whose jurisdiction the Wyoming lands lay, according to Pennsylvania law.

The formidable preparations being made at Fort Augusta caused considerable uneasiness and excitement among the people of the valley. By virtue of his rank as chief militia officer and by reason of his extensive experience in actual warfare, Colonel Zebulon Butler was given charge of the preparations for defense, as well as command of the inhabitants who responded to the call to arms. Neither our regiment nor any one of the companies composing it was ordered out, as a militia organization, to oppose the oncoming Pennamites; but the inhabitants of the valley generally were summoned to this duty. The men who responded were mainly—in fact, almost exclusively—enrolled members of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th companies of the 24th Regiment. Scouts, sent out every day, reported the progress of the Pennamites—who had taken up their line of march about the 15th of December, from Fort Augusta. On the 20th the invaders had arrived opposite the mouth of Nescopeck Creek, some nineteen miles below Nanticoke Falls, but were advancing slowly on account of the snow which had fallen and the ice which was gathering in the river. Colonel Butler mustered his available force—which numbered about 400 men—on Saturday, December 23rd, and marched to the left bank of Harvey's Creek, where he encamped for the night on a level stretch of land near the river. It was impossible to pass Nanticoke Falls with a laden boat, either going up or down the river.

Early Sunday morning, December 24th, Ensign Mason F. Alden in command of a detail of eighteen men, was directed to remain on guard at Harvey's Creek. Captain Lazarus Stewart, with twenty men, detached to the east side of the

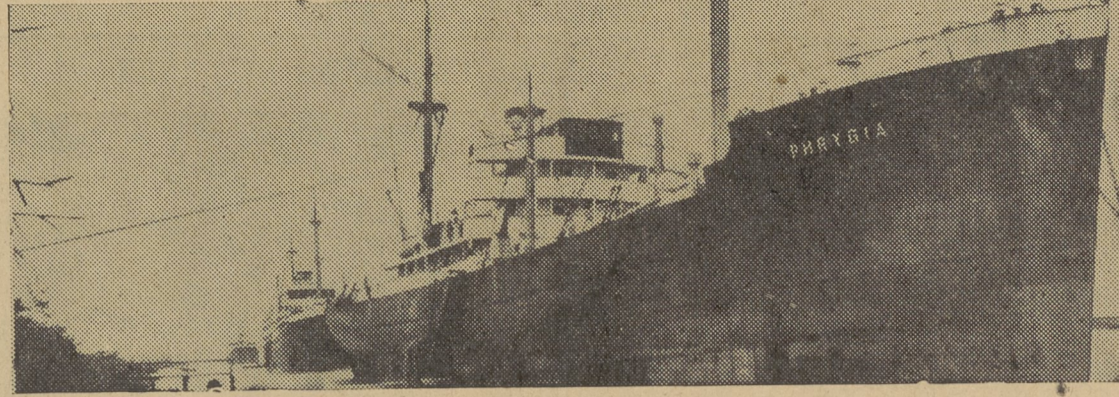
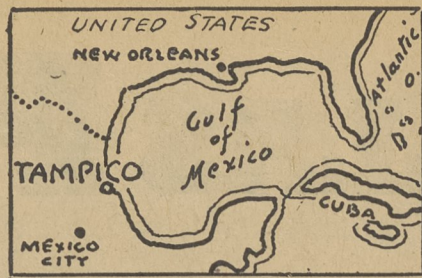
## IT'S A SMALL WORLD SAYS DALLAS RECRUIT TO TRUCKSVILLE SOLDIER

While on the train going to Schofield Barracks from the army transport which had carried him to Hawaii, Gilbert Huey, recently enlisted son of Mr. and Mrs. Milton Huey of Dallas, saw someone waving outside his car window at a station stop. Investigating, he was asked by a uniformed stranger, "Are you from Dallas?" "Yes," he replied, "but I don't know you." To which came the answer, "You should, I'm Roy LaFrance from Trucks-

ville." river, above the falls, with orders to lie in ambush and prevent the landing on that shore of any boat's crew. Colonel Butler, with the remainder of his force, then retired up the river about a mile to a point of natural defense where a precipitous ledge of rocks extended from the Shawnee mountain in a southeasterly direction almost to the bank of the river, a distance of nearly half a mile. The land in the vicinity was well covered with trees, and the road from Harvey's Creek to the village of Plymouth passed between the lower point, or end, of the ledge and the river bank. The Yankees took up their position at this rocky rampart, and wherever it was defective for their complete defense they erected breastworks of logs and stones.

Later in the morning of Sunday, about eleven o'clock, Ensign Alden, being apprised at the mouth of Harvey's Creek of the approach of the Plunket expedition, retired with his men up the river and joined Colonel Butler. Deploying his column on the flat just abandoned by the Yankees, Plunket directed a spirited advance in pursuit of Alden, not doubting but that the main force of the settlers was near, and that the hour of conflict had arrived. In less than thirty minutes the advancing line was halted by Plunket, who was at its right, in front, and was heard to exclaim, "My God! what a breast-work!" Scarcely had these words been uttered when there came a

## NAZI MERCHANTMAN SCUTTLED OFF MEXICO



Ending a dramatic attempt by four German merchantmen to run the British blockade, the 4,137-ton freighter PHRYGIA lies in the Gulf of Mexico, a scuttled, charred derelict. Her three companion ships turned back to the Mexican port of Tampico (see inset map), where the vessels are shown previous to their sortie. The Nazi captains believed they were being pursued by British warships, but there is a possibility the warships were part of the United States neutrality patrol.

discharge of musketry, crackling from end to end of the long extended rampart, and giving no uncertain notice that this unlooked for barricade was well garrisoned. One of Plunket's men was killed and three others were wounded, while the body of the invaders was thrown into great confusion, and, without returning the fire of the Yankees, immediately retreated to Harvey's Creek. They then brought two of their boats from Harvey's Landing past Nanticoke Falls by land, and made preparations to cross the river by detachments, in order to march by way of the eastern shore against the village of Wilkes-Barre, the chief objective point of the expedition.

After nightfall, boats, well filled with soldiers, started across the river some distance above the falls. When the boats had nearly reached the opposite shore, they were, without warning fired upon by Captain Stewart and his men who were concealed in the thick woods on the bank. Two or three men in the first boat were wounded, one of whom subsequently died. The boats were hastily and excitedly backed astern into the channel of the river, whereupon, having got within the suction of the falls, they shot down through them and the rapids below,

fortunately without mishap, and were brought to in the pool at Harvey's Landing. Thus ended the occurrences of Sunday.

Early in the morning of Monday—which was Christmas day—the Pennamites, who had bivouacked on the flat at the mouth of Harvey's Creek, were astir. Colonel Plunket, having formed his men in two divisions, again marched up the river to the breast works, or "rampart rocks", held by the Yankees. While one division stormed the works, the second division ascended the mountain on their left and attempted to turn the right flank of the Yankees. The conflict lasted, with frequent cessations, during the greater part of the day, and on the side of the settlers some three or four men were killed and three times as many were wounded. Towards the close of the day Colonel Plunket,

finding the position of the Yankees too strong to be carried, withdrew from the field and immediately began his retreat down the west side of the river.

This was the baptism of fire for the regiment. Colonel Butler's tactical decisions and selection of ground for the defense were sound and logical. The dispute between Connecticut and Pennsylvania was now laid aside and all energies were bent toward winning independence from England.

Colonel Wright, who later commanded our regiment, recites the following story which is interesting and helpful in seeing the picture of those times.

Benjamin Bidlack was a remarkably good singer. During the Penn-

## Will Preach Sunday

Miss Charlotte Mintzer, of Dallas, will preach Sunday morning at 11 o'clock in the Glen View Primitive Methodist Church, Fern Brook. A short song service, led by John Lowe, will precede the service.

amite-Yankee conflict he was arrested and lodged in the Sunbury jail, where his songs led the people to collect about the grated window of his cell and in the evening men, women and children would gather there to listen to the Yankee's songs. They finally prevailed upon the jailer to let the man out that they might see him.

Upon one of these occasions, in singing a song called "The Swagging Man", he told his audience that to give them a proper appreciation of the character he was representing, they must give him a cane, and make room for him, as he could not do his subject justice otherwise. They gave him a cane, and cried out, "Give him room, make way, let him have a fair chance". The prisoner, after taking a drink, and passing backwards and forwards several times, acting out the character of a drunken man, to the word, when he came to the chorus, "Here goes the old swagging man", he bounded from them like a wild deer. Pursuit was in vain, "the swagging man" was too fleet of foot and strong of limb for the pack at his heels. Dawn of day found him thirty miles from his prison door; and before sunset, he rejoined his family in his log house in Plymouth. At this period of his life Mr. Bidlack seems to have been addicted to habits of intemperance, later he reformed, became a religious man, joined the Methodist church, and devoted the remainder of his day to preaching the Gospel.

He became an Ensign in our regiment in 1793; his brother was killed in action at the battle of Wyoming.

(To Be Continued)

## Scout Women

### Plan Activities

To Entertain Scouts At Christmas Party

Committee members of Girl Scout Troop No. 9, Shavertown, were entertained at the home of Mrs. Oscar Dymond, Thursday Evening. Plans were made for the supper meeting to be held at the Shavertown Methodist Church December 9th when the committees of troops No. 66 and 9 will be hostesses to the Dallas District Council. Plans were also made to entertain the scouts at a Christmas party December 12th. Mrs. Edward Gilroy, captain of the troop made a fine report concerning the activities of the troop. Present were: Mrs. Delbert McGuire, Mrs. Martin Porter, Mrs. S. R. Schooley, Mrs. Hayden Williams, Mrs. Herbert Lundy, Mrs. Gilroy and the hostess.

### Pinochle Club

Mrs. Mabel Davis, Parrish Heights, entertained the members of her Pinochle Club at her home on Monday afternoon. Those present were: Mrs. Emma Stookey, Mrs. Eleanor Wilson, Mrs. Jennie Thomas, Mrs. Margaret Adametz, Mrs. A. C. Woolbert, Mrs. Eva Meade, Mrs. Elsie Van Buskirk and the hostess. Prize winners were Mrs. Woolbert and Mrs. VanBuskirk.

### Fernbrook Scouts Meet

Twelve Girl Scouts of Fernbrook Troop met Monday afternoon under the leadership of Miss Margaret Gerlach.

Jean Russell passed her tenderfoot test and the second class scouts worked on the Health and Safety Field and the International Friendship Field.

Games were played before good-night circle at which group singing was enjoyed.

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## GAY-MURRAY NEWS



**SANTA CLAUS**  
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Each Christmas finds more useful things and more health building sports equipment in Santa's deliveries. Useful gifts give pleasure long after trinkets are gone and forgotten. We have useful gifts for "Pop", "Mom", "Sister", and "Brother".

Charles Humphrey at Montrose and Archie Ellsworth at South Montrose are recent customers for Suburban Bottled Gas Service and Bengal Ranges. Say fellows! Wouldn't one of these outfits be a swell Christmas gift for your "Missus"?

Good days to re-roof are getting scarce but it's wiser to put it on before it snows than to groan after. Lawrence Mock at Jenningsville and Frank Spadine at Nicholson are using Moredrain galvanized sheets. Albert Race at Vernon is trying our 5-ply roll roofing.

Dairymen! In our Harness Shop we can now give you prompt sharpening service on clippers with new factory grinding equipment. Barney says, "We'll fix your harness too." Bring or send them in.

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