

Birch Bark Express

The newsletter of Butler's Rangers

Editor: *Cornoral Michael Trout UE*

January 2002

Commander's notes – by Dave Solek

It has been a bittersweet year.

Throughout our extended family some have lost loved ones; others have illness or medical problems being treated. To all, we extend our heartfelt prayers.

On the regimental side, we've set new milestones. "Coats and caps" are the way to go. It's our trademark and I can't think of any other recreated Crown force group that resembles us. As we are ferreting out more hidden documentation, I feel confident we can create a new manual for future Rangers to use as their "bible" and guide. From all I've read, the simpler and lighter your kit is, the more accurate it is – plus it's easier to pack up and go home.

I'm trying to find someone who can make linen canvas **British-style backpacks.** Those friends of mine who have them say they're great. With one of these backpacks, you can pack all your essentials to play soldier for the weekend, including your blanket.

Speaking of blankets, Bob Stone has provided information about the Scarlet Scarab, with the lowest prices on Whitney point blankets (best on the market). Phone them at (908) 689-1740, or visit their Web site at www.scarletscarab.com. Your best bet is to purchase a white blanket

with black or light blue stripes, as existing examples show. I'm told that multi-colored stripe blankets did not come into use until the 1800s.

Too many officers at White Plains? Yes, many of you (like me) noticed the abundance of British officers bouncing about without a unit, command, or purpose. These "units of one" present a problem to the General Command: what do you do with them? Make them glorified runners, I guess. I can see on the horizon they will be told to get with the program: get a unit or get back into the ranks! Officers lead the company but sergeants lead the men! Our competent company commander Scott Patterson did a great job, and we were blessed with two excellent sergeants, Dave Parsons and Rick Thompson. Our contingent never looked better with these two fair but firm men at the helm. Add our two faithful Mohawks and what a team we had. I look forward to the next large show in 2002. Hope to see you there!

Our annual meeting has been tentatively set for Saturday, 2 March 2002, beginning at around 11 A.M. at Ron and Peg Roff's home in Vestal, N.Y. Pot luck dinner as always. You'll soon receive an agenda with directions.

Dues. The BAR dues have increased to \$25 per head of household, but stayed the same at \$5 for each additional person. Company dues remain the same: \$10 per household. They are due no later than

2 March. Please be kind to our treasurer Don Paukett and get them in early. When you get your BAR form, send the total amount to Don at 2064 County Road 32, Greene NY 13778-2338. Make payable to *Susquehanna Flintlocks*.

After action reports

Battle of Brooklyn 225th Anniversary, New York 18 August 2001

When the idea of doing an event in Brooklyn was first told to me last year, I said "You're nuts!" Boy, was I wrong. The event was fun, and the crowds were great. The logistics of busing everyone from Fort Hamilton to Prospect Park was done without any problems. This was a tremendous planning job by Herb Yellin and the BAR. The battle was fun and the march through the Park

Slope section of Brooklyn was great. At night we were able to pay \$10 and eat at the buffet at the Officers' Club. This was one of the best BAR events in years. Attending were Ernie Coon, Mike and Phil Malvagno, Matt Ryan, Kenny Santilli, and Dave Solek. There were at least 300 re-enactors there. I can't wait for the next 225th event.

-- *Submitted by Phil Malvagno*

Ft. Klock Interrupted Harvest, St. Johnsville, N.Y. 29-30 Sept. 2001

Attending were John Buck, Joe Labuki, Chris Miazga, John Resou, Bob Smith, Dave Solek, Jim Stevens, Michael Trout, and perhaps half a dozen other seldom-seen Rangers from far and wide. In addition to the usual morning tacticals, this year Ft. Klock set up something a little different: a two-day scenario depicting a Loyalist family at home. On Saturday the family was confronted by the Committee of Forfeiture, backed up by Rebel militia. There is some scuffling, a shot is fired, and the family is placed under house arrest. On Sunday the Crown forces appear, attacking the militia whose

tents are set up next to the house. Aided by natives and regulars, we scatter the militia to the four winds, burning their tents while our officers prepare the family for safe evacuation to Ft. Niagara. Other militia units are in hot pursuit, however, and they attack our rear. Like the good Rangers we are, we protect the main body and the family from this new threat, slowly giving ground and inflicting heavy casualties upon the enemy. Eventually we retire from the field in good order, with the family safely on its way. The Loyalist family expresses their gratitude to us for saving them from an unknown fate.

Another special event at Ft. Klock that weekend was the visit by the United Empire Loyalist Association of Canada. On Saturday, Dave Solek and Michael Trout met two bus loads of Canadian descendants of Mohawk Valley loyalists, and escorted them about the site. That night Dave and Michael served as colour guards at the Loyalist Banquet held in Amsterdam. We talked with several descendants of loyalists, including Butlers and Johnsons, and we picked up a lot of

interesting information. We met one gentleman whose ancestor had been a Butler's Rangers drummer boy. We also discovered that there may be a Butler's Rangers regimental coat in the Jordan Historical Museum, a small museum west of Niagara Falls. We made many new acquaintances and will keep in touch with them in the hopes of learning more. Our thanks to the U.E.L. Association of Canada for a most enjoyable event.

Old Stone Fort Days, Schoharie, New York 6-7 October 2001

The event coordinators again provided an excellent venue. Attending were Ernie Coon, Mike and Phil Malvagno, Don Paukett and family, Dave Solek, Bob Stone, and Michael and Luann Trout (and their two Canadian guests). Saturday afternoon's battle saw us on the left flank pushing the Rebels (and our native "allies") towards the town below. Evening saw the "three musketeers" (Ernie, Bob, and Dave) spending the night in town raiding the dessert table at the dance and soiree.

Sunday morning's tactical found us taking a nice "walk in the woods." The afternoon battle had the Crown forces being pushed back to "Oswego." Overall, a beautiful fall weekend with changeable weather that cooperated during battles.

Because of the huge Saratoga events planned for 2002, the Schoharie event for that year will probably be canceled, rescheduled, or replaced with a smaller event. But Schoharie's Old Fort Days will be back in full force in 2003. Make your plans now.

– Submitted by Dave Solek

Battle of White Plains, Ward Pound Ridge, N.Y. 27-28 October 2001

Simply put, by all Rangers who attended, it was an "outstanding, excellent event." Attending were 22 Rangers from all over the U.S. and Canada, plus two Mohawks from the Six Nations Reservation in Canada – plus Ken Santilli doing his Brant's Volunteers/Indian Department

Ranger impression in a red coat faced green, or, as the Malvagnos called him, our "tuba player." Thanks are due to Bob Stone, who supplied the camp kitchen area that became our base of operations. On Saturday there was a miscommunication about the

morning tactical, so Rick Thompson and Lt. Dave Solek went to scout out the area and got embroiled in several sorties. Saturday's battle saw the highly motivated, thoroughly dedicated, rompin' stompin' company of Butler's Rangers and Mohawk allies involved in a tremendously hot brush firefight – where's those bandoleers (cartridge belts) when ya' need 'em? Our faithful Mohawks and Volunteer were sent to the far left flank to guard against a breach by Rebels. They were quick to sniff Continental powder, held their own, and returned with two prisoners. The battle ended at the bridge, to be continued.

Sunday morning found us scouting the bush again behind the Congressional lines, letting several platoons and cavalry pass by at the wood's edge. It was decided to ambush 'em from behind. Under the intrepid Captain Patterson's leadership, we dashed across the open and holed up in a dense copse of woods with a hornet's nest of Continentals running close behind. We charged a large Rebel contingent on the hill but were repulsed. But with the addition of a platoon from His Majesty's 10th Regiment of Foot, we stormed and took the hill – which, by the way, the Advanced Guard had been unable to take. And this was with Butler's Rangers at

Fall of Fort Lee, New Jersey

(Also known as the “Bataan Death March.”) Attending were Ernie Coon, Ken Santilli, and Dave Solek. The Rangers led the Provincials on a

less than full strength – one oversleeping Ranger (who shall remain nameless) arrived at the battle late, couldn't find us in the dense clouds of smoke, and joined up instead with the 40th Foot, providing them with many much-needed cartridges.

Sunday's battle found us back at the bridge and storming “Chatterton's Hill.” While certainly not “battalion boys,” the Rangers performed the linear exercises well, and, I am told, impressed and surprised the British High Command (we get our Oscars as soon as they can find them).

This event provided an Anglican Church service (attended by many), hosted one of the largest turnouts of merchants (almost 50), and provided regularly-cleaned portable toilets (ranked 9 out of 10 by Phil Malvagno because there were no magazines). Late Saturday night, it was rumored, Lt. Solek consumed an impressive quantity of rum and was seen holding up the pole for the kitchen fly. Further rumors stated that much later than night, someone lit up a pipe near Lt. Solek's tent and a bright blue flame lit up the sky for a millisecond.

For those who attended, Bob Hope's immortal theme song will echo: “Thanks for the memories!”
– *Submitted by Dave Solek*

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spirited step, leaving the column 200 yards behind. At the first stop, it was decided to put the Rangers in with the Advanced Guard (what an

oxymoron – slowly we stepped, inch by inch, step by step ...).

Funny, but we were still moving too fast and almost caught up to the Continentals – how the hell did they get away in the first place? After pounding away on the streets of New Jersey (with many stops), we met our foe by Historic New Bridge Landing. The battle was mediocre, although flushing a brace of snipe, woodcock, teals, and whatever added some spice to the “bridge too far to cross.” Dave got stuck in an

impromptu BAR board meeting and Ken got stuck in one hoot of a party. So home went those two adventurers as six of the seven dwarves – one grumpy, sneezy, and bashful, and the other happy, dopey, and sleepy. (No, Ken, that was not Snow White in the toll booth, and if you wore your coat like you were supposed to, you’d find out that women like a man in a uniform!)

– Submitted by Dave Solek

Upcoming events

Note: The following preliminary schedule is printed as a courtesy of the sender and is for information only. Events and dates are subject to change or cancellation. Butler’s Rangers has not received invitations to many of these events, so do not commit to attending an event until you have confirmed that we are invited and that the dates have been finalized. We will determine our final schedule at our annual meeting on 2 March.

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| January 20 | 33rd Hell or High Water Shoot , Boone Homestead, Birdsboro, Penn. |
| February ?? | Bergen County Historical Society Workshop , New Jersey (BAR) |
| March 2 | Butler’s Rangers Annual Meeting , Vestal, New York
Please attend! Among other things, we will determine our event schedule for 2002. |
| March 23 | Skirmish at Van Cortlandtville , New York, 225 th Anniversary (BAR) |
| April 13-14 | Brigade School , New Windsor Cantonment, New York (BAR) |
| April 27-28 | Battle of Ridgefield , Connecticut, 225 th Anniversary (BAR)
This event has been in the works for a long time. Lt. Solek requests your attendance. |

- May 18-19 **Sagg Harbour** (6th Connecticut)
- June 1-2 **Fort Number Four**, Charlestown, New Hampshire (LHA)
- June 1-2 **Redding Ridge**, Putnam Park, Redding, Conn. (6th Connecticut)
- June 1-2 **Boone Homestead Firelock Matches**, Birdsboro, Pennsylvania
- June 15-16 **Ethan Allen Days**, Sunderland, Vermont
- June 29-30 **Battle of Short Hills** 225th Anniversary, Plainfield, New Jersey (BAR)
- July 5-7 **Battle of Hubbardton**, Vermont, 225th Anniversary (LHA)
 First of the 225th anniversary of Burgoyne's campaign events, and it should be a good one.
- July 13-14 **Battle of Fort Ann**, Fort Ann, New York (LHA)
- July 20-21 **Battle of Oriskany** 225th Anniversary, New York (BAR)
- July 27-28 **Soldiers on the Mount**, Mt. Independence, Orwell, New York (LHA)
- August 3-5 **Siege of Stanwix/Battle of Oriskany**, 225th Anniv., Rome, N.Y. (NPS)
- August 10-12 **Battle of Flockey**, Schoharie, New York (BVMA)
 This event is an unofficial replacement for Schoharie's usual Old Stone Fort Days of early October, which are canceled in 2002 because of the big Saratoga events.
- August 10-11 **New Paltz Market Days and Militia Muster**, New Paltz, New York (BAR)
- August 17-18 **Battle of Bennington** 225th Anniversary, Vermont (LHA)
 Another of the big events commemorating the 225th anniversary of Burgoyne's campaign.
- September 7-8 **Brown's Raid**, Fort Ticonderoga, Ticonderoga, New York (LHA)



September 27-29 **Remembrance of Saratoga** (NPS)

A three-day encampment including educational programs and living history displays.

October 5-6 **Fort Montgomery 225th/West Point Bicentennial**,
New York (BAR)

This celebrates the BAR's 40th anniversary, and may include a memorable banquet.

October 12-13 **Second Battle of Saratoga** 225th Anniv., Stillwater,
N.Y. (BAR, BB, CL)

One of the biggest events of the year, on private lands just north of the battlefield.

Lt. Solek humbly requests your attendance.

October 19 **Surrender March of Gen. Burgoyne** 225th Anniv.,
Schuylerville, N. Y.

Starts at the Monument in Victory, N.Y. Fireworks on the Hudson River in the evening.

October 19-20 **Burning of Kingston** 225th Anniversary, New York
(BVMA)

October 20 **Schuyler Mansion**, Albany, New York

To be determined **Military Tattoo at Saratoga Race Course**, Saratoga
Springs, New York

From the archives

At Carleton Island on 23 September 1780, Capt. Alexander Fraser sent a letter to Gen. Frederick Haldimand, reporting that he had sent the ship *Caldwell* to deliver ordnance and provisions to Sir John Johnson at Oswego, despite bad weather. However, there were also letters for Sir John from Col. Bolton, and Fraser stated "...I dispatched the letters ... by a Birch Canoe express; as the wind is foul it will be a more certain method of conveying them quick to him." Thus the name of our Butler's Rangers newsletter.

-- From the *National Archives of Canada*, Haldimand Collection

On 22 December 2001 the *Albany Times Union* had an impressive 21-inch front page story titled "**County hopes past will draw patriots.**" Some excerpts: "As Americans rediscover their patriotism in the wake of Sept. 11, Saratoga County is hoping to cash in with a four-month

heritage celebration next year to commemorate the 225th anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga.

A military parade at Saratoga Race Course, a full military re-enactment of the second battle and first ceremonial “Surrender March of General Burgoyne” are events being planned for the most ambitious attempt ever made to honor the decisive events that led to American independence, said Gina Johnson, program director at Saratoga National Historical Park.

“Historic tourism is something that over many years has been growing, and we’re going to capitalize on that,” said Linda Toohey, vice president of the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce, who is marketing next year’s events on their Web site and in a pamphlet.

Registered attendance at the Saratoga Battlefield increased about 8 percent this year to 61,100, according to Park Manager Doug Lindsay...

...Fort Ticonderoga in Essex County attracted a record 113,863 visitors this year, a 7 percent increase from last year. Attendance also spiked this year at the Skenesborough Museum in Whitehall and Fort William Henry in Lake George.

The numbers should increase next year due to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, observers say.

“Now is a time for self-questioning on an individual, community and national basis, and some rediscovering about what is great about America and what’s here to protect and to nurture,” said Timothy Holmes, co-chairman of the 225th Anniversary Committee. “And it’s in heritage tourism that that comes alive.”

The 200th anniversary celebration event did not meet expectations, according to organizers. “We were expecting 30,000 to 40,000 people and we got 5,000 to 10,000. This one will be such a broad-based commemoration because of 9-11, because it’s the first big anniversary since the bicentennial and because we’re working with the county, historical groups and museums,” Johnson said.

The 225th anniversary will be a four-month celebration, called The Northern Campaign, that will start in June and end Oct. 20 in Albany’s Schuyler Mansion. Events will be held across the state.

Promotional activity for the 225th anniversary will start New Year’s Eve at various first night activities in the city, said Sean Kelleher, executive director of the Center for Heritage Education and Tourism in Saratoga, which is planning next summer’s activities. Kelleher coordinated a military re-enactment in Quebec City five years ago that attracted 110,000 spectators. He also organized the 225th anniversary of the battles of Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts, attended by over 200,000 people.

“My guess is we’ll probably get about 60,000 to 80,000 people over the big humps, the big weekends, and probably all told over 200,000,” Kelleher said.

He said he expects almost 2,000 re-enactors to take part in a commemoration of the Battles of Saratoga and is still negotiating with the New York Racing Association to play host to the first military tattoo, or musical parade, at the race course.

It's these kind of numbers that encouraged government and tourism officials to chip in on the planning for next year's anniversary. The Saratoga County Board of Supervisors, the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce and the National Park Service met recently to outline four weekends of events, most of which will take place in October, the month in which the battles occurred. Foliage season is at its peak then, county officials pointed out..."

On the Net: <http://www.saratoga.org>

An excerpt from Walter D. Edmonds's 1936 novel *Drums Along the Mohawk* (Little, Brown, and Company):

"...They moved with great swiftness and discipline. They burned the farms, houses, barns, barracks, even Attle's brand-new backhouse. They killed all the horses and cows in their way. They headed for Salisbury; and swept that settlement at dusk. There they captured only three men, for the other inhabitants had moved into the Mohawk Valley down around Klock's and Fox's Mills and had n't yet returned. But the destructives razed the town. Then they headed out along the old Jerseyfield road, northwest, past Mount's, the scene of their first irruption.

The leader of the party had attracted a great deal of attention in Snydersbush because of his uniform. It was a strange one; nobody had seen anything like it. A green coat, it was said, and deerskin breeches, and a black leather hat like a skullcap with a brass badge on the front of it. He roused a great deal of morbid speculation. Some of the old settlers said it reminded them of the uniform worn by the French commander, Beletre, back in '58. It was over a month before a report from James Dean, outside Niagara, informed them of Butler's Rangers. With his usual precision in detail he included a description of the new uniform.

The conviction gradually took root that John Butler was making an attempt to cut off German Flats...."

After living in downtown Albany for a dozen years, it was quite a change to move to Selkirk last year, where open fields, heavy brush, and farmland predominates. It wasn't long before I spotted a New York State historical marker nearby, on the north side of Creble Road, on a small hill overlooking the Vlooman Kill. The marker reads:

Buried at this site are two soldiers of the American Revolution
 Tunis Slingerland, 1st Regt.
 William Winne, 3rd Regt.
 Albany County Militia
 Tawasentha DAR Placed 1975

There are two original tombstones. On the first stone are a few illegible words, then "...memory of William Winne Born Feb 22nd AD 1754 O.S. and departed this life Oct 4th A.D. 1812 N.S. aged 78 years 6 months and 29 days. Let me die the Death of the Righteous and let my last end be like his. Numb. 23:10." The second reads "Jane [?] Van Alstyne Wife of William Winne Died February [?] 1833[?]" and then there are several illegible lines. Both tombstones also have footstones, the first labeled "W.W." and the second "J.V.A." I could find no trace of Tunis Slingerland's grave.

However, the name **Tunis Slingerland** appears in the "Roster of Butler's Rangers" as printed in Ernest Cruikshank's 1893 *The Story of Butler's Rangers* (Lundy's Lane Historical Society). Could this be the same Tunis Slingerland who also served with the 1st Albany? Slingerland is a common last name in this area; there are 53 Slingerlands listed in the Albany phone book, and one of Albany's suburbs is named Slingerlands. I don't know how common Tunis was as a first name in the 18th century. But we do have documented evidence that it was not uncommon for soldiers to switch sides during this period. If this Tunis Slingerland buried in Selkirk is indeed the same man who also served with Butler's Rangers, we might suppose that he switched from Butler's to the 1st Albany rather than the other way around – simply because of the location of his grave, which would more likely be in Canada had he ended his service with the Crown. The full story of Tunis Slingerland obviously remains to be told.

Interestingly, just across Creble Road from Tunis Slingerland's grave is a house from the early 1700s. Possibly the oldest existing structure in the Town of Bethlehem, the long-abandoned home had been deteriorating badly before it was purchased last year. The new owner is an expert in historically accurate renovation, and his work is progressing nicely.