

Birch Bark Express

The newsletter of Butler's Rangers

Editor: *Corporal Michael D. Trout U.E.*

February 2011

Commander's notes *Sergeant David Solek*

2010 was a blessed and busy year. Katie (VivianLea) and I were married on 2 May. We thank all of you for your well wishes and blessings. The priest thanks all of you for waiting until outside the church for the throwing of rice, knives, and tomahawks.

Our unit is blessed with a new Web site, www.butlersrangers.com, created by our own Pvt. John Korchok, who joined Capt. Frey's Company only last year. John has been very busy with this praiseworthy project, and needs photos and articles.

Our annual meeting is scheduled for 5 March 2011. Pvt. Tom Delucco has agreed to host the meeting at his home in Coventry, Conn. Among other things, we will establish our 2011 calendar of events, which we will then post on our Web site.

One 2011 event we should all attend is the Battle of Wyoming, Pa., in July. We all

know that Butler's Rangers and Iroquois warriors won a great victory over the rabble there. Earlier this year, Katie found a description of Lt. Col. Butler's appearance at Wyoming, which you can find elsewhere in this newsletter. It adds another "piece of the puzzle" for our interpretation of the Ranger appearance. Our goal of doing a common impression uncommonly well will always require improvements as documentation is discovered. We owe it to the original Corps of Rangers and their descendants to strive to do the best interpretation we can.

I'm looking forward to seeing you at the annual meeting, and to planning a successful campaign for 2011.

Your humble and most obedient servant,
Sgt. Solek

Dues increase

Due to the lack of paid shows in 2010, we need a significant unit dues increase for all members of Susquehanna Valley Flintlocks, our financial organization.

From 2006 through 2010, we've been able to keep dues at \$10 per household, thanks to income from paid shows. For example, in

2008, we got \$600 from Ft. Montgomery and Putnam Park, and in 2009, we got \$500 from Ft. Montgomery and Fairfield. We currently have 18 dues-paying households. The resulting \$180, with no income from paid shows, will not meet our estimated \$500 insurance bill for this year. There are a couple of scenarios to consider:

Scenario 1: A change from \$10 per household to \$10 per adult over 16 (assuming no change in membership) gives us \$240, which is still far short.

Scenario 2: A change from \$10 per household to \$20 per household gives us \$360. This is still well below the \$500 insurance bill, but gets us closer.

As you can see from the above numbers, it is critical that we find some paid shows for 2011 **and** increase our membership. Putnam Park is an easy gig, but didn't get enough turnout last year. We can request a weekend better than last year's early November, but we must do so early and make a firm commitment to support it.

-- *Katie Caddell*

After action reports

**Twin Forts
2010**

Fort Montgomery, New York

2-3 October

Or: "Butler's Rangers Kick in the Back Door of Fort Monty"

Our War Party consisted of: Ensign Jonathan Reynolds, Sgt. David Solek, Cpl. Michael Trout, Cpl. Ernie Coon, Pvt. Tom DeLucco, Pvt. Jim Matthews, Pvt. Matthew Ryan, Pvt. Angus Ryan, and Christopher "He who makes things with hands" (our Seneca native ally).

The weather was good and dry, the temperature was fair. Our mission was to run around the right flank of the enemy fort and attack it from behind. Many of the known trails flanking the fort were blocked with fallen trees, and others flooded due to a severe storm the previous day. Before the battle, Sgt. Solek had us searching for new trails. We also made note of areas that could not be crossed, and formed fire teams.

As the Crown forces began their final assault on the fort, the Continentals were well aware of our plan to flank them. They hoped to block us where the trail narrows just west of the fort. Butler's Rangers moved

forward down our pre-scouted trails and intercepted the enemy riflemen. We went right through them before they knew what was happening, then encountered a large body of Continentals. Stopping for nothing, we blasted around, through, and past them, pushing them to the edge of a cliff and then turning their flank. Chasing them out of their cover, we came out behind the main body of militia and fired into their rear. They beat a hasty retreat with their flank turned.

We followed on their heels and immediately ran again into the riflemen, who had reformed to cover the retreat. Cpl. Coon and Pvt. DeLucco pushed to our left to flank the riflemen, but now the enemy was in better cover and more stubborn. We were also in good cover, and face to face we exchanged volleys with our adversaries.

This was not the situation we wanted, and Sgt. Solek ordered us to swiftly take to a deer trail we'd found earlier. This led to another trail north of the fort. We hoped the heavy action to the west would draw attention away from our move.

However, a few detached riflemen spotted us. Sgt. Solek, Cpl. Coon, Pvt. DeLucco, and our native ally intercepted this foolish bunch and held them in check, while Cpl. Coon urged us toward our objective. Ensign Reynolds and Cpl. Trout led Pvts. Matthews, Matthew Ryan, and Angus Ryan at full speed down the north trail toward the rear of the fort. We were careful to stay in good file with enough spacing to avoid being spotted.

When we came to a point where the trail left the woods, we halted when we spotted a lone Continental guarding the trail. Cpl. Trout announced he would run down the trail, and if the sentry was foolish enough to fire the rest of us would rush him. Pvt. Angus Ryan volunteered to go instead; indeed it would be wise to save the Corporal for further use. Pvt. Ryan was not yet halfway when the sentry fired, but dove to safety into the brush. The instant the sentry fired, the rest of us gave a Haudenosaunee war cry and charged with loaded muskets, Pvt. Ryan rejoining as we rushed past.

The sentry and his comrades immediately fell back. But each time they sought cover Cpl. Trout and Pvt. A. Ryan kept moving upon them, allowing Pvt. M. Ryan to get to the left or right and expose them to defiling fire. Meanwhile, Pvt. Matthews covered our rear while Ensign Reynolds coordinated our attack. After two or three failed attempts to find cover, the enemy sentries fled, calling for more help, leaving Butler's Rangers in complete control of the rear of the fort.

We prepared to push our advantage when there was a tremendous yell and the entire enemy force abandoned the fort, retreating past us like the devil himself was chasing them. We ordered those nearest to us to surrender, but we were so overwhelmed by the mass of men rushing past it was difficult to maintain any order. Still, Cpl. Trout captured four rebels, Pvt. A. Ryan two, and Pvt. M. Ryan two. Pvt. Matthews scalped the dead and dying, while Sgt. Solek, Cpl. Coon, Pvt. DeLucco, and our native ally assisted with confiscating the Congress's provisions and ale.

--Pvt. Matthew Ryan, Walter Butler's Company

Editor's note: After the battle, I saw Ken Siegel, Crown commander, talking with rebel officer Henry Cooke. Ken asked Henry why he had not put up more resistance. Henry replied, "Because I was up to my neck in green hornets!" For the rest of the weekend, Butler's Rangers were referred to as "green hornets." Later, a rebel rifleman told me he was disappointed in the battle since he was hoping that both sides could "play in the woods." I told him, "We had an assignment: to get into the rear of your fort. We weren't going to play with you. We're Butler's Rangers, and if you get in our way we'll run over you." In my nine years as corporal, I have never seen a better demonstration of the abilities of Butler's Rangers.

Butler's Brotherhood

Inlet, New York

15-16 October 2010

This was something of an experiment. At some recent events, various Rangers have expressed an interest in getting together

outside of reenactments. The idea is that it would be a lot of fun to just socialize in modern clothing, while sharing food,

conversation, and good times. How well would this work? Cpl. Trout decided to volunteer his family's Adirondack cottage for a weekend.

The cottage, or "camp" as Adirondackers usually call them, can sleep 11 and has full cooking and dining facilities, and one bathroom. The camp was named "Cool Shag-Na" by Michael's grandfather in 1954, who claimed it was Mohawk for "where friends meet." Although there's increasing evidence that's not true, on this weekend the camp certainly turned out to be a great meeting place for friends.

Those attending included Sgt. Dave Solek and Katie, and Ens. Jonathan Reynolds and Lisa. From Ten Broeck's Company came Lt. Jim Stevens and Sgt. Roger Garrison. At 2:30 Saturday morning we were awakened by a knock on the door; it was five meowing kittens from Canada, soaking wet in the near-freezing rain. Actually, it was five members of McDonnell's Company: Capt. Scott Peterson, Pvt. Walker Astle and Aleah, Pvt. Paddy Doyle, and Sonia. We put them up in "Innisfree," the camp next door owned by Michael's cousin from California.

The weather all weekend was miserable, with a steady rain all day Friday and Saturday, with temperatures threatening to drop below freezing. Sunday the rain tapered off, but at several degrees below freezing. Of course, we planned to mostly stay indoors. Unfortunately, Cool Shag-Na's furnace had died a few years ago, and its fireplace needs work. However, we were able to use the fireplace on a limited basis, and, after some effort, we were able to make the indoors quite warm, assisted by a number of electric heaters.

We had planned optional outdoor activities, including a possible off-site tactical. Scotty's group wanted to go ahead with this, so we gave them a hearty Saturday breakfast and sent them on their way—except for Sonia, who elected to stay with us, warm and dry. All weekend we stuffed ourselves with excellent food, including a huge amount of venison, potatoes, casseroles, and lots of stuff I can't remember. Lisa brought way too many pies, but we made a valiant effort to destroy them.

You know how much we all tend to flap our jaws at reenactments—well, this was a lot worse. A group of Rangers out of uniform, well-fed, warm and dry, can out-talk anybody. At times there must have been three or four different conversations going, along with sewing projects, looking through documents, and checking out the pie situation. You'd think there was a whole regiment occupying the camp. We had planned some sing-alongs, cards, and board games, but we were having so much fun talking we forgot all that.

Sunday morning the crowd began leaving as Michael and Jonathan headed out to deliver Sonia to McDonnell's, some distance away. About halfway there, Michael's Plymouth Voyager blew a water pump, leaving us in a quandary as there is little cell phone coverage in the area. Luckily, a police officer appeared quickly and brought us to a convenience store where Sonia's cell phone worked. Butler's Rangers jumped to the rescue, sending two vehicles to deliver Sonia and to bring Michael and Jonathan back. The prostrate Voyager was dropped off at the only auto repair facility within many miles, while Lisa held down the fort back at Cool Shag-Na. Thanks to everyone's help, what could have been a huge misfortune turned out to be a minor

inconvenience. It's times like these that show the real camaraderie of Butler's Rangers. I am most grateful to all.

The Ranger Retreat experiment was judged a huge success, and we hope to do this again

at Cool Shag-Na this year. All Rangers and their families are invited. We hope for better weather, with the possibility of outdoor activities.

-- Cpl. Trout

Book review

Mark Jodoin, *Shadow Soldiers of the American Revolution: Loyalist Tales from New York to Canada*. Charleston, S.C., The History Press, 2009. ISBN 978.1.59629.726.5. Trade paperback, 158 pages, \$21.99 US.

“In letting loyalists leave, we are depriving ourselves of the best and brightest men in our country.” – *George Washington*

In 2006 I participated in one of the tiniest, yet most enjoyable, events I've done, recreating the brazen 1780 Loyalist attempt to kidnap Gen. Philip Schuyler from his Albany home. At the time I knew almost nothing of this incident. Mark Jodoin's *Shadow Soldiers* fills some of the gap, with a brief look at the life of Dr. George Smyth, one of the chief surgeons in the military hospital in Albany—and a Loyalist spy. It was Smyth who hatched the plot to grab Schuyler, which came within an eyelash of success. Smyth's medical skills were in great demand, as were his intelligence-gathering skills. His activities repeatedly landed him in prison, from which he usually escaped, aided by a large Loyalist spy corps. Most of Smyth's family worked as Loyalist spies, including his wife, both sons, and his brother.

Shadow Soldiers is a compact 11-chapter book. Each chapter presents, in about a dozen pages, a brief biography of a notable

Loyalist. Although by no means a comprehensive look at the subject, this book still contains several fascinating tales, particularly when dealing with more obscure Loyalists. Among these are:

- Sergeant Rice Honeywell of the Massachusetts Line, who fell in love with the daughter of a Loyalist spy, followed the family to Canada, and made his fortune there (his son founded Ottawa).
- Mohawk leader Captain John Deserontyon (Mohawk name *Odeserundiye*; “where thunder was”), whose career was similar to Joseph Brant's—although the two men often strongly disagreed about war strategy. It was Deserontyon who, after the war, sneaked back into the Mohawk valley and dug up the silver communion set he had secretly buried at Fort Hunter in 1777. Deserontyon brought the silver set, which had been bequeathed to the Iroquois by Queen Anne in 1710, back to Canada without being discovered. It is still used in Mohawk ceremonies there today.
- Henry Simmons, who led a group of 27 Hudson Valley Loyalists, walking 75 miles to join up with Burgoyne's army in 1777. Enlisting with Edward Jessup's men, Simmons quickly rose to the rank of Lieutenant, fought at

Hubbardton and Saratoga, and was one of the 5,900 men who laid down their arms at Saratoga. The terms required Simmons and others to move to Canada, and in 1784, he and 11 survivors of the original group settled just west of Kingston, Ont.

- Colonel John Stone, a prosperous Connecticut merchant whose Loyalist father was jailed. Chased for days by a mob, Stone escaped on a boat across Long Island Sound. With his home and business confiscated, Stone enlisted in DeLancey's Brigade, but was captured and imprisoned. Escaping again, he turned to the profitable business of privateering. With war's end, Stone was banished from Connecticut, and went on to establish Gananoque, Ont. In 1812 war came to John Stone again. American invaders, still considering Stone a traitor after almost 30 years, shot his wife and ransacked his home. Stone died in 1833 at age 84, outliving most of his family and many of those who had banished him from Connecticut.

More famous Loyalists covered in the book are Joseph Brant, Molly Brant, and Sir John Johnson. However, two of the subjects (Mary Hoople, abducted by Indians, and Simon Fraser, explorer of Canada), although fascinating, had little or nothing to do with Loyalism. At a book signing, I asked Jodoin why John Butler was not one of the 11 Loyalists in his book. He assured me that he is at work on another book in which Butler will receive due attention.

The author goes a little astray at the beginning of each chapter, where he gives an overly long summary, diluting the impact of the full story when it begins after the

summary. A more straightforward sequence of events would have made the stories more involving. There are a few typos and other errors (Jodoin presents Hubbardton as a crushing British defeat and places the Battle of Bennington in Vermont), but overall this is a unique and rewarding book.

Each chapter is well-illustrated with period prints of various locations and structures, along with well-drawn sketches by the author. A very nice touch are the 11 maps, drawn by the author, showing the life journeys of each subject. Although these maps contain an error or two, I've never seen anything quite like them. Biographies would do well to include a similar feature.

Shadow Soldiers also contains a fascinating foreword by David Wilkins, former U.S. Ambassador to Canada (2005-2009), who states, "Most Canadians think they know *everything* about America, and most Americans think they know *enough* about Canada. The truth is, Americans and Canadians alike would be well served to know and understand one another a lot better. This book is one wonderful way to bridge that learning gap."

The author wisely refers to himself as a "heritage writer" and not a historian. He is currently the history feature writer for *Esprit de Corps*, a Canadian military magazine. Jodoin says this book "is intended for casual readers with an interest in history," and although it's not exactly a scholarly treatise, the author is being a bit modest. *Shadow Soldiers* is a fine, solid introduction to Loyalists that should spur many readers to seek more information about these amazing 11 people, and other Loyalists as well.

-- Cpl. Trout

Camp colours for Butler's Rangers?

On occasion we find our tents within large formations where it can be difficult to locate the Butler's Rangers contingent. Many regular British units use camp colours to mark their location, which by royal warrant are 18" by 18" flags in the unit's facing colour, with identifying words or marks. Sgt. Solek has a couple of small plain red silk flags that we sometimes use, although they are not really camp colours. Cpl. Trout has red silk purchased some years ago for such purpose. Is there interest in making real camp colours for us?

Our historian Bill Smy says he has never found any reference to Butler's camp colours, and since they never camped in large formations he doubts they ever had one. So, what we would place on the colours? Our cartridge box badge is one suggestion, but is it accurate for this purpose? Would the words "Butler's Rangers" be more appropriate? Or something else? Let's hear your thoughts. We could vote for a design.

The Slingerland family

In the January 2002 issue of *Birch Bark Express*, we had the beginning of the story of Tunis Slingerland, buried around the

corner from your editor's home in Selkirk, N.Y., a few miles south of Albany. The historical marker nearby 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.

Interestingly, the name of Tunis Slingerland appears in the "Roster of Butler's Rangers" in Ernest Cruikshank's 1893 *The Story of Butler's Rangers* (Lundy's Lane Historical Society). At the time, I wondered if Tunis Slingerland served in both Butler's Rangers and the 1st Albany. Switching sides was not terribly unusual during the war.

Some time later, however, I emailed our historian Bill Smy to see if he had more information. He replied that the Tunis Slingerland buried in Selkirk is the father of the Tunis Slingerland of Butler's Rangers.

Furthermore, in Smy's 2004 masterwork *An Annotated Nominal Roll of Butler's Rangers 1777-1784 with Documentary Sources* (Friends of the Loyalist Collection at Brock University), we find more about this family.

The 1st Albany's Tunis (also called Anthony) Slingerland, of Manor Rennselaer, N.Y., was the father of four sons who served as privates in Butler's Rangers: Garret (born 1754), Tunis (1756), Richard (1759), and Walter (1767). After the war, all four sons settled in Canada, while their father obviously remained in New York.

Garret was in the King's Royal Regiment of New York in 1777, probably before joining Butler's. He was back in the States in 1798,

but probably just for a visit as his eight children are listed as baptized in Canada, one as late as 1818.

Tunis (junior) and Richard were in McDonnell's Company in 1778, and Dame's in 1783. Richard also served in the 1st Lincoln Regiment during the War of 1812.

I wish we knew more about what caused such a violent family split, with four boys turning against their father. I hope they never encountered their father on a battlefield, but we know all survived the war. There are dozens of Slingerlands listed in Albany phone books, and the same is true for the Niagara region of Ontario.

From the archives

“Fort Forty stood upon the banks of the river, and the spot is preserved as a common – beautifully carpeted with green, but bearing no distinctive marks denoting the purposes for which the ground in those troublous times was occupied. Near the site of the fort, is the residence of Mrs. Myers, a widow lady of great age, but of clear mind and excellent memory, who is a survivor of the Wyoming invasion, and the horrible scenes attending it. Mrs. Myers was the daughter of a Mr. Bennett, whose family was renowned in the domestic annals of Wyoming, both for their patriotism and their courage. She was born in 1762, and was of course sixteen years old at the time of the invasion. She was in Fort Forty when Colonel Zebulon Butler marched out at the head of the provincials against the enemy. Her recollections of all that passed beneath her eye on that occasion are remarkably vivid. The column marched forth three or four abreast, in good spirits, though not

unconscious of the danger they were to encounter. Still, they were not apprized of the odds against them, since the enemy had most skillfully concealed his strength.

“Soon after the departure of the provincials, several horsemen galloped up from below, their steeds in a foam, and the sweat dripping from their sides. They proved to be Captain Durkee, Lieutenant Pearce, and another officer, who, having heard of the invasion, had left the detachment of troops to which they belonged, then distant fifty miles, and ridden all night to aid in the defence of their wives, their children, and their homes. “A morsel of food and we will follow,” said these brave men. The table was hastily spread, and they all partook of their last meal. Before the sun went down they were numbered with the dead. The inmates of the fort could distinctly hear the firing from the commencement of the battle. At first, from its briskness, they were full of

high hopes. But as it began to change into scattered fire, and the sounds grew nearer and nearer, their hearts sank with the apprehension that the day was lost, and their defenders on the retreat. The suspense was dreadful, and was sustained until near night-fall, when a few of the fugitives rushed into the fort, and fell down, wounded, exhausted and bloody!

“Mrs. Myers was present at the capitulation on the following day, and saw the victorious entrance of the enemy, six abreast, with drums beating and colors flying. The terms of capitulation were fair and honorable, but as the reader has already seen, the Indians regarded them not, and immediately began to rob, plunder, burn, and destroy. Col. Dennison, according to the relation of Mrs. Myers, sent for Colonel John Butler, the British commander. They sat down together by a table on which the capitulation had been written, (yet carefully preserved by Mrs. Myers.) She and a younger girl were seated with the fort close by, and heard every word they uttered. Colonel Dennison complained of the injuries and outrages then enacting by the savages. “I will put a stop to it, sir, I will put a stop to it,” said Colonel Butler. But still the plundering continued, and Butler was again sent for by Colonel Dennison, who remonstrated sharply with him at the violation of the treaty. “We have surrendered our fort and arms to you,” said Colonel Dennison, “on the pledge of your faith that both life and property should be protected. Articles of capitulation are considered sacred by all civilized people.” “I tell you what, sir,” replied Colonel Butler, waving his hand emphatically, “I can do nothing with them: I can do nothing with them.” And probably he could not, for the Indians, in the end, had the audacity to strip Colonel Dennison himself of his hat and rifle frock (a dress then often worn by the

officers). Colonel D. was not inclined to submit peaceably to this outrage, but the brandishing of a tomahawk over his head compelled his acquiescence – not, however, until, during the parley, the colonel had adroitly transferred his purse to one of the young ladies present, unobserved by the Indians. This purse contained only a few dollars – but it was in fact the whole military chest of Wyoming.

“Mrs. Myers represents Colonel John Butler as a portly, good looking man, of perhaps forty-five, dressed in green, the uniform of his corps, with a cap and plumes. On the capitulation of Fort Forty, as the victorious Butler entered it, his quick eyes rested upon a sergeant of the Wyoming troops, named Boyd, a young Englishman, a deserter from the royal ranks, who had been serviceable in drilling the American recruits. “Boyd!” exclaimed Butler on recognizing him, “Go to that tree!” “I hope your honor,” replied Boyd, “will consider me a prisoner of war.” “Go to that tree!” repeated Butler with emphases. The deserter complied with the order, repaired to the tree, which was without the fort, and at a signal was shot down. Butler drew his white forces away from the valley shortly after the capitulation. But the Indians remained about the settlements, and finished the work of destruction. In about a week after the battle, the torch was applied to most of the dwelling houses then remaining, and Mrs. Myers saw that of her father, Mr. Bennett, in flames among the number. He, with his family, thereupon fled from the valley to a place of greater security – Mrs. Myers and her sister, Mrs. Tuttle, being among the fugitives.”

-- William L. Stone, *The Poetry and History of Wyoming: Containing Campbell's Gertrude, & the History of Wyoming from*

its Discovery to the Beginning of the Present Century (3rd edition.) (Wilkes-Barre: C.E. Butler, Bookseller, 1873); page 23.

Editor's note: For quite different accounts of Wyoming, see Cruikshank's *The Story of*

Butler's Rangers, pages 46-51, and Howard Swiggett's 1933 *War Out Of Niagara*, pages 124-132. In his *Annotated Nominal Roll of Butler's Rangers*, Bill Smy says the story of Boyd "seems to be without foundation."

God Save Great George Our King

God save great George our King,
Long Live our noble King,
 God save the King!
Send him victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
 God save the King.

O Lord, our God, arise,
Scatter his enemies,
 And make them fall.
Confound their politics,
Frustrate their knavish tricks!
On him our hearts are fix't.
 O save us all.

Thy choicest gifts in store
On him be please'd to pour,
 Long may he reign!
May he defend our laws,
And ever give us cause,
To sing with heart and voice,
 God save the King!

O grant him long to see
Friendship and unity,
 Always increae:
May he his sceptre sway,
All loyal souls obey,
Join heart and voice, huzzah!
 God save the King!

(Following verse added in 1800)

From ev'ry latent foe,
From the assassin's blow,
 God save the King!
O'er him thine arm extend,
For Britain's sake defend
Our Father, Prince, and Friend,
 God save the King!

Editor's note: Research shows that most of us are pronouncing "huzzah" incorrectly. The fourth stanza here is further evidence that "huz-ZAY" is correct.