

THE SESQUI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF SULLIVAN'S RAID

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In the war of the Revolution there were two hundred and seventy eight recorded battles and skirmishes of which ninety two took place within the boundaries of what is now New York State, seventy nine in South Carolina and one hundred and seven in all of the other states combined. One-third of the total number took place in New York State so that our State played an important part in the war for American Independence. Of all of the campaigns for American Freedom, the Sullivan Expedition was one of the most important, many historians place it at the head as having the most far reaching results.

You have heard a history of this campaign today and without encroaching upon that history I want to briefly call your attention to the conditions at the time this campaign was inaugurated. The war had been in progress over four years and without either side having gained any decided advantage. The British hold practically all of the sea-coast and had established a blockade preventing the importation of supplies and equipment for the American army. The western frontier was held by a combination of Indians, Tories, and some British troops, who were harassing and killing the settlers, burning their homes, and carrying off their cattle and crops. What was, perhaps, more important, the Indians were raising corn, fruit, vegetables, hay, and grain for the British army, in fact that was nearly their entire sustenance.

The British plan of campaign seemed to be one of watchful waiting by starving the Americans on the one hand and by letting the Indians harass them on the frontier and breaking down their morale until the colonists would accept defeat. The settlers upon the western frontier were calling for help from these massacres and this call became most insistent. Washington knew that if the Iroquois Nation were not subdued that the war could never be won. He also looked ahead to peace and wanted the inland empire which only could be obtained if in his possession. If peace had been arranged before the Sullivan Expedition, the western boundary line of the United States would probably have run from the St. Lawrence River thru the Finger Lake region to Pittsburgh, and the ground upon which we now stand might still have been part of the British Empire.

Washington formulated a well laid out plan, which he placed before Congress, who authorized the Expedition and arranged for raising the necessary funds. The results of this campaign may be briefly summarized as follows: first, the destruction of the Indian settlements, driving the Indians out of central and western New York and for a time at least giving security and protection to the frontier settlers of New York and Pennsylvania; second, the power of the Tories was curbed and enlistments to the British ceased to be so numerous during the rest of the war; third, the supplies of corn and dried beans, which had come to the British store-houses were cut off and the English were from that time on forced to feed and clothe the hostile Indian nations, and thus their scanty supplies were placed in jeopardy; fourth, a claim was staked for the acquisition of lands south of the Great Lakes, when the time came to make a treaty of peace, in short the destiny of the interior of the North American Continent was decided by this campaign, and immediately after the close of the war the lands of Western New York and Pennsylvania were opened for the thousands of settlers who flocked in.

With the results as above outlined, it is well and fitting, that at the end of the one hundred and fifty years following the campaign, that the proper recognition ~~be~~ given the event and that the details of this Expedition be brought to public attention. Granite monuments and boulders have been set to mark their entire route. Celebrations have been held at Canajoharie, Cooperstown, Endicott, Ohomung, Cherry Valley, Salamanca and other points. There have been held three major celebrations, the first at Leicester on September 14th, at Geneva on September 21st, and at Elmira on September 28th.

On September 12th, 1779, Sullivan's army had reached a point near the head of Conesus Lake, where they camped. He knew they had arrived in the region of the Genesee Valley, but did not know how far the river might be, so he sent a scouting party, headed by Lieutenant Boyd, ahead to get the lay of the land. They went a few miles until they came to Canaseraga Creek, which emptied into the Genesee River, and not finding any Indians they turned back. The Indians had got between this little party and Sullivan's army and led Lieutenant Boyd into what has been known since as the Crevoland Ambuscade. Fourteen men were killed on the spot, Lieutenant Boyd and Sergeant Parker and one Indian guide were captured and the balance of the party consisting of eight men escaped. The Indian guide was killed and Lieutenant Boyd and Sergeant Parker were led a few miles across the Genesee River to what was then known as Little Beard's Town, named for Indian Chief by that name. *On September 14th Boyd and Parker were most cruelly tortured and killed.*

This spot has since been known as the Wayside Shrine. It consists of one acre of ground about one half mile east of the village of Cuylerville and lays right beside United States Route 20 and ~~by~~ it ~~is~~ Little Beard's Creek. It is a beautiful grassy plot and in the center stands the Torture Tree, an oak tree around which, as a sapling, the men were tortured. On the banks of the creek is a little mound under which the bodies of Boyd and Parker were buried until their bones were removed to Mount Hope Cemetery in the city of Rochester in 1841.

The forenoon exercises of the ~~the~~ Leicester Celebration were held at this Wayside Shrine exactly one hundred and fifty years after the death of these heroes. Speeches were made by Senator Knight and State Historian, Dr. A. C. Flick and one or two others in which proper praise to these heroic men for their valiant deeds was given. A ten ton granite boulder was unveiled and on the side of this boulder is a bronze plate about two by three feet upon which is inscribed their heroic deeds.

About two miles west of Cuylerville is the village of Leicester and just south of the village is a natural amphitheatre, where a mammoth pageant was given in the afternoon. The pageant field itself was one-third of a mile long and on two sides there were gently rising slopes upon which the forty thousand people who attended were seated. On the opposite side of the field was a creek whose banks were lined with trees, which served as a screen where the actors made preparations for the scenes. Nearly twenty five hundred people took part in this pageant which lasted from two o'clock until dark. Ten miles of telephone wire had been strung from the director's control station to enable the director to give his orders. An amplifier had been set up so that all might hear everything that the actors said. There was a mixed chorus of more than three hundred voices and massed bands furnished the necessary music. The actors were properly costumed and had spent weeks in rehearsal. It is difficult to properly describe this pageant within the limits of a paper of this kind, but I want to briefly tell you what each act was about.

Act One showed Indian life at the beginning of the American Revolution, children were playing their childish games, the young men were playing a game of lacrosse while the squaws were cooking over their camp fires.

Some of the causes of the campaign were brought out in Act Two. It showed the village of Cherry Valley and the massacre that took place there.

Act Three showed the headquarters of the Continental Army with delegations coming to General Washington demanding help to prevent further depredations.

Act Four showed the Congress in session and the plan of Sullivan's Campaign was presented to it. The members in their

Knee-breeches and powdered wigs and with their stately manners as they made their speeches would hardly be a counter-part of the present session of Congress.

In Act Five Washington offered the command of the Expedition to General Gates, who refused it, and it was then offered to General Sullivan, who accepted it.

In Act Six the ball that was given in Albany on the eve of General Clinton's departure was shown. Some two or three hundred took part and dressed as they were in the costumes of that day as they danced the stately minuet, they presented a striking contrast to our present day dances. Many thought this the most beautiful part of the pageant.

In Act Seven the mustering of the troops of General Sullivan at Easton, Pa. was shown. The men were dressed according to the styles of the frontier back-woodsmen of that time.

Act Eight showed General Clinton's march from Canajoharie to Lake Otsego, and when one saw their equipment and methods of transportation they got a vivid idea of the difficulties which were encountered in this campaign. The men carried long muskets of the period with their powder horns slung over their shoulders. There was some little pretense of uniforms, but they consisted of what could be most easily obtained. Part of the way on this trip the men were transported on flat bottom boats down the Susquehanna River.

Act Nine showed the meeting of the armies of Sullivan and Clinton at Tioga Point. Only such supplies as could most easily be transported were taken along, while the reserve supplies were left there under guard of a few hundred men.

Act Ten showed the Indian Council in session at Kanadasaga, and Chiefs Brant and Bulter made eloquent appeals to their followers to repulse the White man's army.

The Battle of Newton was portrayed in Act Eleven and was intensely realistic with several hundred participants. A few cannon of the period, throwing three pound shot, was drawn up by horses and boomed throughout the battle. Pack horses brought up the supplies. There was a constant crashing of musketry fire. This was the most exciting and, perhaps, the most realistic act of the pageant.

Act Twelve described the Groveland Ambuscade.

In Act Thirteen Mary Jemison pleads with the Indians to make peace with the White man.

Act Fourteen shows the destruction of the Genesee Castle together with the fields of corn and other crops which were burned. Fields of corn had actually been planted last spring to be burned at this time.

Act Fifteen was the final act and shows Sullivan's army upon their return to Fort Reid, where Elmira is now located.

I have never seen such a large crowd so intense upon one purpose. Watching it, one lived over the stirring scenes upon which the Republic was built.

This same pageant was repeated on Saturday, September 21st, upon White Spring's farm just southwest of Geneva. This is a fruit farm of one thousand acres and upon which there was once a small Indian village, and there are still two burial mounds that can be seen. Beside the highway in front of the road is what is known as LaFayette Tree under which it is alleged that General LaFayette rested during his tour of this country. As part of the Geneva Celebration, the committee had gathered together a large amount of relics of the colonial period and had furnished rooms as the homes of that time were furnished.

The village of Kanadasaga was one of the two principal villages of the Seneca Indians and was located upon top of the hill just on the outskirts of the City of Geneva, and the land is now owned and occupied by the New York State Agriculture Experiment Station. The forenoon exercises of the celebration that day were held at this point. The Pro-emption Road, which later caused a dispute between the States of New York and Massachusetts, runs by the side of this old Indian village. A granite marker, some eight to ten feet high erected on this corner, was unveiled at this time. These monuments all have the same bronze tablet upon them. At the top they show the heads of Generals Sullivan and Clinton and then a map of the route of the Expedition. Below is this inscription "1779 an Expedition against the hostile Indian Nations which checked the aggressions of the English and Indians on the frontiers of New York and Pennsylvania extending westward the dominion of the United States."

Within the village of Kanadasaga the Indians had erected a stockade of about one acre of land within which they could retire in case of a battle. Within this stockade were built two block houses and this stockade ran to a little brook, so that they were assured of a water supply. Upon the grounds, once contained within this stockade, is still an Indian burial mound and upon this mound is a small granite marker.

To enable the people at this celebration to see how the original stockade and block houses looked, the Boy Scouts of Geneva rebuilt them on a miniature scale and they attracted much attention.

This same pageant was repeated before an even larger crowd in Mark Twain Park in Elmira on September 28th. There has always been a keen interest in Elmira in this Expedition, owing to the fact that the principal battle of the campaign, the Battle of Newton, was fought just east of the city. For many years the State has maintained a park marking the site of this battlefield and a granite monument about one hundred feet high marks the spot.

The final celebration of this campaign was held at Salamanca on Saturday, October 5th where a monument to Colonel Brodhead and his men was unveiled. It will be recalled that as a part of the Sullivan Campaign, Colonel Brodhead was to march from Fort Pitt, now Pittsburgh, with six hundred and fifty men and destroy the Indian's crops and villages up the Allegheny River and ultimately to join Sullivan's army in the Genesee Valley. Owing to the difficulties encountered in getting started, he was some ten days to two weeks late to join Sullivan. As it was an unbroken wilderness and nothing to mark the spot, it is not known exactly how far he got before he turned back, but his report to General Washington shows that he traveled several miles after crossing the New York and Pennsylvania State line. The Indian legends are that he traveled as far north as the mouth of Bucktooth Run, which is about one mile southwest of the city of Salamanca, and at that point the only battle of the campaign was fought. At the celebration the other day an old Indian told me that he could recall, when a boy, hearing his grandfather tell about where this battle was fought at the mouth of Bucktooth Run.

Owing to the uncertainty of the exact location, the monument was erected in the American Legion Memorial Park upon Broad Street in Salamanca. Peter Nelson, Assistant State Historian made the principal address of the day. Mrs. Mary Brodhead Hunter of Kittanning, Pennsylvania, a direct descendant of Colonel Brodhead, unveiled the monument.

These celebrations have brought home to the people of New York and Pennsylvania some of the struggles of the American army of the Revolution endured in order that our present Government and civilization might exist. We can not do too much to keep alive the history of those struggles and to venerate the memories of the heroes of that period.