



Deerpark Diary

June 2004

Vol. 1

#2

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Anyone interested in sending comments, photos, information, etc., please contact: Norma Schadt, Town Historian, mail address PO Box A, Huguenot, NY 12746 or 1863 Huguenot Schoolhouse, 25 Old Grange Road, Mondays 10:00-12:30, Tuesdays 10:00-3:30 or by appointment. Phone 856-2702 or 754-8070.

Brant's Raid July 20, 1779

Deerpark Diary, Vol. # 1 covered Brant's October 1778 raid. After the raid, Count Casimir Pulaski was ordered to protect this valley with a battalion of cavalry against further attack. He remained until February 1779 when he was ordered to South Carolina. The settlers were left with only the protection which they could provide for themselves. They spent that winter in Fort DeWitt and Fort Gumaer.

During the spring everything

seemed peaceful and quiet. The settlers planted their crops and took care of their homes and farms. This peace did not last long. Brant knew that the farms here had cattle, oxen, horses and supplies to replace the losses the Indian populations had sustained by the many raids on their lands in western New York. He also knew that there was little protection.

Brant and his men left Oquaga, near present-day Binghamton on July 8, 1779. He reached Peenpack during the night of July 19, 1779 and attacked before daybreak on July 20th. The surprise was so complete that several houses were in flames before any of the inhabitants were aware that they were under attack. With no means for defense, residents fled into the wooded hills.

A detailed contemporary report states the attackers burned the following buildings: Major Decker's house and barn; Solomon Davis' house, barn and mill; the Black Rock School; Jacobus Van Fleet's house and barn; Esquire Kuykendall's house and barn; Simon Westfall's house and barn; the old Maghaghkemack Church; Peter Kuykendall's house and barn; Martinus Decker's fort, house barn, and saw-mill; and Nehemiah Patterson's saw-mill.

Four men were killed and three prisoners were captured. Cattle, horses, farm animals and supplies were taken. Brant and his men then marched northward

Toward Grassy Swamp Brook near the Mongaup River where he had left his other two troops.

News of the attack quickly reached Goshen and Warwick. Colonel Tusten of the Goshen militia ordered his officers to meet him the next day with as many volunteers as they could raise. One hundred and forty-nine men met at the appointed time at Major Decker's storehouse on Neversink Drive. The militia did not have many arms or much ammunition so Colonel Tusten thought it would be wise to wait for reinforcements. However, some wanted to recapture all that had been stolen and were ready for battle. During these discussions Major Meeker mounted his horse and, flourishing his sword, cried out, "Let the brave men follow me. The cowards may stay behind." Of course all followed. They traveled seventeen miles and camped for the night. The next morning they were joined by Colonel Hathorn with a small force of the Warwick militia.

Colonel Hathorn outranked Colonel Tusten and took command of the combined forces. Because they were outnumbered, both colonels wanted to wait for reinforcements, but again the hot headed majority prevailed and the pursuit was kept up.

The river territory was wild and hostile. About fifty miles from their homes, the militia came

upon a recent encampment of Brant's warriors. At this point the militia realized that the raiders were much stronger than anticipated. The colonels again wanted to wait for reinforcements, but the regulars wanted to engage the raiders.

Near Minisink Ford, on the Delaware River, the battle was joined. The Battle of Minisink was long and bloody. The militia gradually were hemmed in on a rocky hill. Late in the day Brant noticed that there was a gap in the militia line. The raiders breached the line and killed over half of the militiamen.

The remains of those slain in the Battle of Minisink were left for forty-three years. In 1822, Dr. David Arnell of Goshen and a group of others gathered the remains, brought them back to Goshen and placed them in two walnut caskets. On July 22, 1822 the caskets were buried and the First Minisink Monument was dedicated.

Narrow Escapes

A number of stories about the people who escaped the attack in the Neversink Valley have survived through the years. The survival instincts were strong and these stories demonstrate the ingenuity of the early settlers.



James Swartwout

James Swartwout twice escaped death at the hands of Brant's Raiders.

This first occurred when he was pursued by Indians during the October 1778 raid on the valley. He bounded over fences, across fields and through woods until he reached safety at Fort Gumaer. His father and brothers had been overtaken and killed.

Swartwout escaped again during Brant's second raid. He was in the blacksmith's shop on the Anthony Van Etten farm. A few of Brant's men approached the smithy. Swartwout would hide in the chimney. A slave was working in the shop. It was known that neither Brant nor any of his men would harm a black man. He was safe in the shop and continued working on some tools. The warriors came in, looked around, and saw no one but the slave. They picked up, handled, and threw down many articles in the shop. Then one took hold of the handle of the bellows and began to blow up the fire at a furious rate. The slave, knowing the effect the heat and smoke would have on his friend in the chimney, put his hand on the Indian and told him to stop or he would break the bellows. He stopped. The warriors left the shop.

Swartwout climbed out of the chimney, exhausted from bracing himself against the chimney wall and breathing the smoke and hot air.

With thanks, he quickly left the blacksmith shop and escaped into the forest.



Painted Apron Story

"Heard Said, Brant gave Orders that they Should not Kill any woman or Children" a Brant quote as reported by Moabury Owen, an American who had been with Brant.

When Brant's raiders reached the Black Rock School on Neversink Drive, they killed the teacher, Jeremiah Van Auker. The boys ran into the woods. The men gave chase while the frightened girls gathered around their teacher's body. Margaret Decker, daughter of Major Johannes Decker and Dinah Van Etten were two of the girls who were present when a tall, handsome man came toward them. It was Joseph Brant. He quickly picked up a piece of ochre and made a mark on the girls' aprons. He told the girls to hold up the mark when they saw any of his men coming and it would save them. Brant was a Mason and it is believed he had chosen the Masonic emblem as the special mark.

When the girls saw the warriors returning, they showed them the special markings on their aprons and they were not harmed. They went into the woods and

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located the boys. Quickly they pressed the markings from their aprons onto the boys' shirts. When the rest of Brant's men came upon the children and saw the markings, they spared their lives. Brant had kept his word that no children would be killed.

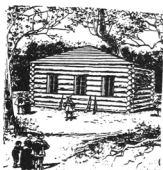
In the 1950s, Asa Quick, who was born in the 1800s, told C. V. Crane, Director, Minisink Valley Historical Society, that he remembered that one of those aprons had been in his family's possession for many years. It was a small, white apron, yellowed with age, made in typical Dutch style. The marks were still visible a century after they had been made.



Rolf Cuddeback's Escape

A detachment of Brant's men approached Jacobus Van Fleet's home. The occupants saw them approaching and fled. Rolf Cuddeback was pursued into the forest by one of the warriors. Finding it impossible to outrun the pursuer, he stopped suddenly. The Indian hurled a tomahawk at him, missing by inches. Cuddeback lunged at the attacker and wrestled him to the ground. A knife fell from the Indian's belt. There was a furious hand to hand struggle for possession of the knife. The Indian's limbs and body were

covered with grease, so he could easily slip form Cuddeback's grasp. In the end Cuddeback, who was the stronger and more powerfully built of the two won the fight. He escaped deeper into the forest and remained there until it was safe to return to his home.



Major Decker's Escape

Many of the inhabitants of the valley were at the old Maghaghkemack Church attending a funeral. An alarm was sounded and everyone ran outside. Smoke and flames of burning buildings were seen rising among the trees. Some men headed toward the settlement. Others fled to different forts. A raiding party spotted Major Johannes Decker as he was heading toward his home. He was shot and wounded. He escaped by hiding in Whilahaosa Cave near Black Rock.



Van Auker Fort

The entire settlement was not destroyed. Daniel Van Auker and his "little fort" gave a good account of themselves. Shots were exchanged. One of the garrison was killed. Then one of the raiders tried to set a building near the fort on fire and was shot. After an hour, Brant and his men left to burn other homes and farms.

After the attack, Brant, in his official report stated, "We have burnt all the settlement called Minnesink except one fort, which we lay before about an hour and had one man killed and one wounded."

Biography

Colonel Joseph Brant
Mohawk Indian Chief
1743-1807

Joseph Brant or Thayandagea, which means "Two sticks tied together for strength", was born in a bark hut in 1743. His early life was difficult, however that changed when on September 9, 1753 his mother, Margaret, married a "Brandt of Canajoharie". Brant was a kind father to Joseph and his sister, Molly.

At age 13, Joseph joined the English in the fight to gain control of Canada. Sir William Johns, England's representative for Indian affairs, saw to it that Brant received an education. He sent him to the Reverend Eleazer Wheelock's School in Lebanon, Connecticut which later became Dartmouth College. After years of being a Christian missionary interpreter, he went to England in 1775.

He was well liked in English society. He always wore his Indian garb, with a tomahawk and knife. A number of English artists painted his portrait. It was at this time he became a Mason. When he joined the British Army, he received a commission as colonel. His goal while in England was to gain land grant for the Six Nations and to protect them from encroachment by white settlers.

Brant returned to the colonies in July, 1776, just as the Revolutionary War was beginning. At Oswego in 1777, he was made War Chief of the Six Nations and influenced his people to side with the British. At the time, General Sullivan was on a campaign to destroy Indian crops and villages in upstate New York. Brant wanted to direct Sullivan's attention away from the Indians, so he began a series of raids in Wyoming, Sullivan and Orange counties. It was at this time that the two raids on the Minisink settlement took place.

In 1782, the peace treaty was signed by England and the United States. Lands in North America were divided with no provisions made for the Six Nations. Brant decided that the future of his people was in Canada. The British granted the Indians 570,000 acres of beautiful and fertile land in Ontario, Canada.

At Brant's Ford, now known as Brantford, they built a church, mills and a school.

In 1786, he returned to England to successfully request aid in claims of his nation for helping the British during the war. He

continued his work for his people. He also supervised the publishing of a new edition of Indian prayer and a Psalm Book, including his translation of St. Mark.

Brant lived the last years of his life at the head of Lake Ontario with his ever faithful supportive third wife, Catherine. They had nine children. In the fall of 1807, Brant became quite ill. On November 24, 1807, Brant died. He is remembered as an outstanding and influential citizen in the history of Canada.

In November 1850, by the side of the little old Mohawk church, near the Grand River, a proper resting place for Brant was set aside. Youthful fullbearers carried him, by relays, back home.



Rio, 1943

Do you know who this is?
Wanted--Old Photos of
Deerpark To Be Copied
Deerpark Historian's Office
Call 754-8070 or 856-2702



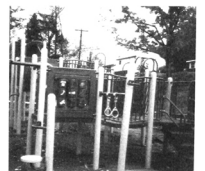
Additional Reading

A History of the Minisink Region
by Charles E. Stickney, Minisink Valley
Historical Society 1989

The Battle of Minisink
www.sullivancountyhistory.org/places.htm

CURRENT EVENTS

Sparrowbush Fireman's Memorial Park Playground



The children of Deerpark have new playground equipment at the Firemen's Park in Sparrowbush. On May 8, 2004 under the direction of Mike Hahn and Sally Malzahn, Co-Chairs of the Recreation Commission, 49 volunteers helped build and set up the equipment. Members of the Commission, Jerry Vandemark, Jenn Malzahn, Seth Goldman, Marie Kimberlin and Betty Hartman, were on hand to give assistance and to provide refreshments for all of the workers. The \$45,000 cost of the project was made possible through a generous donation and by a grant obtained by the Chairs of the Commission. The project was completed on May 22, 2004. Thank you to all who help make this possible.

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Town of Deerpark

Automobile Tour for July 20, 1779 Brant Raid

You will be following the route of the second attack on our valley by Joseph Brant and his Tory raiders. The route has been interpreted through New York State blue and yellow historic markers. Five markers are missing and in the process of being replaced as funding permits. These will be noted in the text.

The tour begins at the intersection of Route 42 and East Peenpack Trail, heading toward Huguenot. Joseph Brant probably came from the Mongaup River following the West Peenpack Trail.

Odometer Readings **Sign Lettering** (location) *Route to travel*
(miles)

- 0 **Indian Raid Route by Which Co. Brant And His Mohawk And Tory Raiders Descended on This Valley July 20, 1779** (Marker missing)
Go east on Peenpack trail 5.2 miles.
- 5.2 **Indian Raid Route by Which Co. Brant And His Mohawk And Tory Raiders Descended on This Valley July 20, 1779** (left side at intersection of Peenpack Trail & Route 209)
Make a right turn onto Route 209. Travel to Neversink Drive and make a left turn.
- 5.8 **Neversink Drive (Horn Road) Along This Old Road Are Scenes of Events in the Raid by the Mohawk Chief, Joseph Brant, July 20, 1779**
(right side of road)
Continue on Neversink Drive.
- 7.5 **Decker Fort Major Decker's Stockaded House on this Site Burned By Brant's Raiders, July 20, 1779. Militia Pursuing Brant Rallied Here.** (left side of road)
Make a left turn on to Grist Mill Road (7.9 reading). Proceed to intersection of Grist Mill Road and Shin Hollow Road.
- 8.0 **Indian Raid Anthony Van Etten Built A Smithy Here about 1756 James Swartwout Hid In Flue During Raid of 1779 Thus keeping His Scalp** (marker missing should be on right side of Grist Mill Road)
- 8.0 **Indian Raid Grist Mill on This Stream Built By Solomon Davis About 1730, was Burned in Brant's Raid, July 20, 1779** (left side of Shinhollow Road at Intersection)
Make a right turn on to Shinhollow Road and then continue on Neversink Drive.
- 8.1 **Wihlahoosa Cave Major Johannes Decker Wounded by Indians of Brant's Raiding Party Escaped By Hiding In The Cave Above, July 20, 1779** (marker missing—The cave area is in the mountainous area on left)
- 8.1 **Indian Raid School Here was Burned by Raiders, July 20, 1779 Teacher Scalped, Boys Made Prisoners, Girls Saved by Brant's Mark on Aprons** (left side of road)
- 9.0 **Indian Raid House and Barn of Jacobus Van Fleet On This Site Burned by Brant's Raiders July 20, 1779** (marker missing—right side of road)

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