



Deerpark Diary

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No. 1

Welcome to Deerpark Diary

This is the first edition of *Deerpark Diary*, a newsletter featuring local history, folk lore, biographies, and bits and pieces from the past and present.

This edition deals with the commemoration of the 225th Anniversary of the Battle of Minisink. Two raids on the Neversink Valley led to the ill fated Battle of Minisink.

The articles in this issue are about Brant's first raid in 1778 and the events of the winter of 1778-1779. The next issue will deal with his second raid.

Other features in this newsletter will include old photos, stories and anecdotes about Deerpark.

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



Why Brant's Raids

Joseph Brant attacked our valley in order to draw Major General John Sullivan away from his attack on the Indians of the Six Nations, British allies, in Pennsylvania and western New York.

General George Washington had ordered Sullivan to destroy the Indian villages and food supplies so that they would no longer attack the settlements along the frontier. Sullivan led 5000 men through the Indian country destroying their crops and many villages. The Indians suffered greatly and were unable to attack the colonists. They became even more bitter and attacked more fiercely in following years.

Brant's raids were not successful in bringing Sullivan's army back to the east to stop his destruction of the Six Nations lands.

Settlers Forced to Spend Winter in Forts

Two hundred twenty-five years ago, 178 Peenpack settlers spent the winter in Forts Gumaer and DeWit. They had gone to the forts after the October 13th attack on the Neversink Valley.

The Peenpack area, known today as the Town of Deerpark, was invaded by Captain Joseph Brant and nearly one hundred Indian and Tory raiders.

They first attacked the Westfall family, killing one man.

Next they attacked the home of Philip Swartwout, who was at home with four of his sons. The Swartwouts tried to escape, however one of the sons was killed while running between the house and barn.

Philip Swartwout was an old man and two of his sons ran along side of him to assist him to escape. Philip realizing that it was futile urged his son, James to run and save himself. The Indians and Tories chased James for more than half a mile through fields and woods. James outran them and arrived safely at the fort.

The father and other brother were killed. The other son ran toward the Neversink River. As he swam across, he was shot just before reaching the opposite shore.

When the rest of the settlers heard the rifle shots, they left their farms and went to Forts Gumaer and DeWit.

Fort Gumaer had been built by Peter Gumaer a few years before the French and Indian War. It was a stone house, 40' by 45', with a full cellar and a high roomy chamber above the main floor. Below the eaves of the house on two sides, he made porches through which to shoot. It was the largest house in the Peenpack area and was well located on a knoll. There was also a large 50' by 60' barn. In 1823, it was demolished.

Captain Abraham Cuddeback was in command of Fort Gumaer. He ordered all the pitch forks to be brought into the fort from the barn. The women put on spare coats and hats and carried the pitch forks over their shoulders so that they looked like soldiers.

All the men and women marched in single file in back of the house and fort. When the

enemy arrived, Cuddeback ordered a drum to be beaten and then marched the group to the front of the fort. They passed in full view of the enemy. Then he ordered the women and children to go into the cellar. Anna Swartwout, the widow of Major Swartwout, was a large and robust woman asked permission to stay with the men to defend the fort. Captain Cuddeback granted her wish. She took a pitch fork to help defend the scaling of the fort.



Anna Swartwout

The enemy passed around the east side of the fort just out of gunshot range. Few guns were fired, as powder and ammunition was scarce. As the raiders came upon a woman and told her to take the following message to the women at the fort. There would be hundreds of Indians joining them by nightfall to attack the fort. The women should leave the fort in order to save their lives. When the women heard this, they panicked and wanted to leave, however the captain ordered them to stay. His order saved their lives.

The raiders left Fort Gumaer and headed toward Fort DeWit.

Fort DeWit was built by Jacob R. DeWit. It was a stone framed house near the Neversink River with an added fort. He was commissioned as a Captain of a Company of Rangers for guarding this

frontier at the beginning of the Revolutionary War. He also had built a grist mill several hundred yards upstream from the house.

At Fort DeWit, the enemy took a position on a wooded hill within gunshot range of the fort. Several volleys were fired against the walls of the house and pickets. Although the enemy was out of sight, Benjamin Cuddeback and others from the fort fired at the enemy. Eventually the raiders withdrew.

Many homes, barns, stables, and storage houses with crops in them were destroyed. The settlers were at a great disadvantage. They had very little food. The only places to live were at Fort Gumaer and Fort DeWit for the coming winter.



Gumaer Stone House (Fort Deputy)

Fort Deputy, built prior to the Revolutionary War, had been abandoned before Brant's raid because no troops were garrisoned there. The fort, house and all of the outbuildings were destroyed. The settlers not only lost the buildings but also the crops that had been harvested and stored at the fort.

Benjamin Deputy rebuilt Fort Deputy after the Revolutionary War. Later it was the home of Peter E. Gumaer, now known as the Gumaer Stone House.



Casimir Pulaski, Polish hero of the American Revolutionary War

Biography

Count Casimir Pulaski

To protect the settlers, General Casimir Pulaski was stationed at Cole's Fort. George Washington wrote a letter to General Edward Hand dated November 16, 1778: "Count Pulaski's legion, consisting of about 250 horse and foot is at Cole's fort in the Minisink settlement. I intend to strengthen it with the addition of some other corps, say about 250 more. Col. Cortland's regiment is between Minisink and Rochester." The troops spent the winter at the fort. Since there were no further attacks, they left in February 1779. This left the region open for the second attack which led to the Battle of Minisink in July 1779.

Count Casimir Pulaski (1748-1779) began fighting as young man in his native Poland when his father led a rebellion in 1769 against King Stanislaus. After his father was captured and executed, young Casimir became the leader of the rebellion. He and 39 of his companions entered Warsaw in disguise to capture the King. They planned to take him to their army, to be a figurehead leader for their campaign against the Russian troops of Catherine the Great. They captured the King, but had to set him free in order to escape from the city. In 1772 he was exiled and fled to Turkey. He went to Paris, where

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he met Benjamin Franklin, the American Ambassador to France. Franklin persuaded Pulaski to come to America to aid the colonies in their fight for freedom.

Pulaski joined George Washington's forces in Philadelphia. After serving at Brandywine, he was made a Brigadier General.

He was horseman capable of the most daring feats of skill. Pulaski organized the cavalry, which was greatly needed by the Americans. Cavalry could move fast enough to be able to reinforce troops under attack and to attack the enemy's weak points. His corps became known as Pulaski's Legion.

After spending the 1778-79 winter in the Minisink Valley, Washington sent Pulaski and his men to serve with General Benjamin Lincoln's army. He was successful in defending Charleston, S.C.

On October 9, 1779, Pulaski was killed during the siege of Savannah, Georgia where he commanded both the American and French cavalry.



Additional Reading

Joseph Brant, Man of Two Worlds by Isabel Kelsay, Syracuse University Press, 1984

Joseph Brant, [Thayendanegea] by Howard Thomas, North Country Books, 1984

History of Orange County by Samuel W. Eager, 1846-47. This book can be read in the Historian's Office or at the Minisink Valley Historical Society.



CUDDERBACKVILLE HYDRO-POWER PLANT

Can you identify these people?

Wanted-Old Photos of Deerpark To Be Copied

One of the more interesting parts of being Town Historian is the cataloging of old photos.

Many photos do not have names, dates, or places noted on them. This information is important in recording the history of our town. One of the features of this newsletter will be to print a picture with the hopes that someone can identify the subjects. Last year I put up a display about the Hawk's Nest which included a picture of people, names unknown. A member of the family saw it, recognized it and gave me the names of the people on the photo. This enabled me to add another piece of history to Deerpark's records.

Many of you have old photos of family and friends who lived here years ago. You do not have to go back very far when looking for photos. Events which happened just twenty-five years ago are of interest.

Today's technology makes it very easy to copy

If so, please let me know.

old photos without doing any harm to the original.

If you have any old photos, please contact me so that we can set up an appointment. It is very easy to scan your photo into a computer and print it out. You do not have to leave it with me, we can do it together and an additional copy will be made for you.

If you have photos of any of the following subjects, please let me know so they can become part of Deerpark's history records:

- Topics of Interest
- Motorcycle Hill Climbs 1940s
- Trotting Track 1910's
- Local Camps & Resorts
- Movies Before Hollywood
- Huguenot Airport



Reminder: It is very important to write names, dates, and events on all of your photos. Your family will thank you.

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Town of Deerpark Map

