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# Indian and Tory Raids

ON THE OTTER VALLEY, 1777-1782

By WYNN UNDERWOOD

THERE were very few Indian raids of any consequence in Vermont prior to the Revolution, but during the war and particularly at the time of Burgoyne's attack from Canada up Lake Champlain, the entire state was threatened. It was in this very year, 1777, that the small towns bordering on the Lake and even those as far east as the foot hills of the Green Mountains were in eminent danger.

Fort Ticonderoga and the fort at Crown Point, both on the opposite shore of the Lake, were the key outposts of the Continental Army and made up the only arm of defense extending into the great northern frontier and wilderness. Other than these two strongholds the towns depended upon their militia, made up almost completely of the townspeople themselves. Every man between the ages of 16 and 50 was required to bear arms and attend muster and military exercise—only ministers, judges, etc. were exempt.<sup>1</sup>

Every soldier and householder were required by law to have ready "a well fixed firelock, the barrel not less than three feet and one half long, or other good firearms . . . a good sword, cutlass, tomahawk or bayonet; a worm and priming-wire for each gun; a cartouch-pouch or powder horn, and bullet pouch; one pound of good powder; four pounds of bullets for his gun; and good flints."<sup>2</sup>

There were no forts in the Otter Valley at this time in the Spring of 1777<sup>3</sup> and as Burgoyne's army marched southward almost unchecked in his campaign against Crown Point and Fort Ticonderoga, any hopes the Vermont settlers had for protection were fading. As Burgoyne's line of supply became longer and more hazardous, he was

1. Hall, Benjamin H., *History of Eastern Vermont*. N.Y. 1858, p. 581.

2. Hall, Benjamin H., *ibid.*, p. 581.

3. Fort Mott at Pittsford was not built until the Fall of 1777 and Fort Ranger at Center Rutland until 1778.

forced to send scouting and foraging parties into the lake shore country. However, he evidently underestimated the loyalty of the Vermonters to the Crown, for his scouting parties were unable to purchase enough food, wagons and forage.

To bring more pressure to bear on the settlers and entice any hesitant Loyalists to his side, he planned a long-term campaign of propaganda. At his camp on the Bouquet River, a little north of Crown Point on the New York side, he prepared a war feast for his Indians which he planned to use as a major part of his war of nerves on the inhabitants of Vermont. These Indians, which he had brought with him from Canada, had been an impediment all the way, as they made up a large part of his army of 10,000 and had to be handled gingerly. They totally lacked the subordination expected from his regulars and mercenaries and Burgoyne feared their ferocity at all times in case they might turn on his own men.<sup>4</sup>

This feast was to prepare the restless savages for the invasion of Vermont and New York in which he hoped to terrorize the people into submission and press more Tories into service for the British army. He evidently knew that his Indians needed no encouragement, but rather a toning down so he spoke before them demanding that they not scalp any of the women, old men or children—only those who actually resisted with arms. He also ordered them not to scalp a wounded or dying man and as a special inducement he offered rewards for prisoners brought in to him.<sup>5</sup>

The Indians were not unleashed immediately after the feast. Burgoyne was waging psychological warfare and he wanted to make known to those who failed to comply with any of his demands that the consequences would be drastic. He issued a note of warning which was probably passed abroad by word of mouth or posted in the form of broadsides. This warning he liked to call his *Manifesto*. It was issued from his camp on Putnam Creek, June 29, 1777 and in it he told of the force of the British armies and fleets and of the savagery of his Indians. He promised security and protection to all those who went about their work quietly and who did not evacuate their cattle and remove their corn and forage. He assured anyone who paid heed to his manifesto that they would be paid in full for feeding the British troops.<sup>6</sup>

4. Botta, Charles, *History of the United States*. New Haven 1834, Vol. I, p. 450.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 450.

6. Botta, Charles, *op. cit.*, p. 451.

The manifesto brought some of the intended results for Burgoyne. Wild rumors spread and following the first few Indian incursions thousands were panicked and picked up their household goods and moved southward.<sup>7</sup> These first sorties on the Vermont side of the Lake came in the Otter Creek Valley, which was on the direct waterway from Lake Champlain. Moreover, the Crown Point Road<sup>8</sup> and the Old Indian Trail stretched the length of much of this valley. An Indian attack was reported here as early as June of this year at Salisbury and was launched by a large party. Although the records do not state when in June it is quite possible that this was the first attack to strike the Otter Valley settlements following Burgoyne's manifesto.<sup>9</sup>

Joshua Graves of Salisbury who had already once rebuilt his home burned by Indians the previous year, was hoeing corn with his two boys when they spotted a large party of Indians. There were about 250 of them coming down from the north—some in canoes, and some walking along the Creek bank. They ordered Joshua and Jesse his oldest boy, as well as the youngster, to go along with them. The offering of a reward for prisoners was apparently still fresh in the savages' minds.

The party went on up the Creek as far as a farm which Mr. Weeks termed the Kelsey place and here the Indians stopped long enough to butcher a yoke of oxen which they ate for their evening and morning meal. They then paddled on up the Creek to Jeremiah Parker's farm. The Indians found 200 pounds of maple sugar in the house here which they stole and held a pow-wow over. Parker of course was taken captive and placed in a canoe. The group continued on as far as Neshobe.<sup>10</sup>

At Neshobe an Indian guard took over<sup>11</sup> and led the prisoners to Lake Champlain at a point not far from Ticonderoga. The captives

7. Stillwell, Lewis, "Migration from Vermont," in *Proceedings of Vermont Historical Society*, New Series, Vol. V, no. 2, p. 91.

8. This old military road, superimposed upon most of the Indian Trail, connected Number 4 (Charlestown, N.H.) with Fort Ticonderoga and Crown Point. It was completed in 1758 by Lord Jeffrey Amherst.

9. John Weeks describes an Indian raid in Salisbury towards the end of the winter of 1776. At this time Joshua Graves' cabin was burned as well as Widow Story's. The Creek being overflowed, Mrs. Story was able to make an escape by boat. *History of Salisbury*, p. 225.

10. Brandon. The name was changed from Neshobe to Brandon in 1784.

11. Perhaps indicating that Tories or British led this group up until they reached Neshobe.

were put on a British vessel here to be shipped to Montreal. The Indian officer who had been in charge of the rebels demanded of the British his reward for them. However, the British officers considered them peaceful farmers and had them released much to the disgust of the Indian. The four men had to find their own way home as best they could. They were three weeks in getting back.<sup>12</sup>

Burgoyne's offer of a reward for prisoners brought in alive had probably been a deciding factor in saving the lives of these men, for the prisoners stated that the Indians treated them well on their trip and shared their rations—one tablespoonful of pounded parched corn a day. The Indians had plundered very little and stole only what they wanted to eat and they burned no homes.<sup>13</sup>

During the first week in July of 1777 Burgoyne with his army of 10,000 well equipped soldiers, made up largely of Indians, one corps of renegade Tories, and one half German mercenaries, made ready his offensive on Fort Ticonderoga.

General St. Clair was holding the fort for the Americans with a garrison of only 2,540 men. He sent for help and by July 5th Seth Warner arrived with reinforcements consisting of 900 militia. However, in spite of the additional force the odds were too much one way and the Americans were forced to abandon the fort. On July 6th Burgoyne was in command of Ticonderoga and the Americans were making a forced retreat towards Castleton.

That very same day a raiding party of Indians and Tories painted to look like Indians, led by Captain Justus Sherwood, came into Hubbardton and took Benjamin and Uriah Hickcock, Henry Keeler and Elijah Kellogg prisoners. Benjamin Hickcock being a small and very spry man managed to escape when they were all being led back through the thick woods. He returned to his home and on the following night left Hubbardton with his own family and his brother Uriah's family.<sup>14</sup>

Either Sherwood remained on top of Hubbardton mountain all night with his prisoners or else sent them back under guard for he appeared lurking about on the day of the battle at Hubbardton. On this day, July 7th, Sherwood managed to take Samuel Churchill and his family by surprise and make them all prisoners. He plundered the house

12. Weeks, John, *History of Salisbury, Vermont*. Middlebury 1860, p. 235.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 235-236.

14. Churchill, Amos, *History of Hubbardton, Vt.* Rutland 1855, p. 3; Hem-enway, A. M., *Historical Gazetteer of Vt.*, Vol. 3, p. 749.

of all the provisions and clothing that he could find and then ordered the women and children to get out for he was going to burn the house and them in it if they did not obey. The women begged and pleaded and finally Sherwood relented and spared them their house.

Samuel Churchill, however, was led away some distance from the house, tied to a tree and brush piled up around his feet. The raiders then taunted him with shouts of: "Tell us where your flour is, you old rebel!" Sherwood thought that Churchill was holding out on him and had some hidden and so kept him tied to the tree for three or four hours. At the same time they questioned him again and again about his flour and threatened him by touching fire to the brush. At last Sherwood was convinced that Churchill was telling the truth and they left off. They did kill his cattle and hogs, however, and each member of the party was ordered to take as much of the butchered meat as he could carry.<sup>15</sup>

Ezekiel Churchill was such a young boy that he was not forced to go with Sherwood and his men, but William Churchill was taken along until they discovered his foot was so lame that he could not travel. Those prisoners in all that were marched back to Fort Ticonderoga were: Samuel Churchill, Silas and John his sons, Uriah Hickcock, Henry Keeler and Elijah Kellogg.<sup>16</sup>

All of these prisoners were set to work at Ticonderoga, Churchill and Hickcock were detailed the job of boating wood across Lake Champlain, first working under heavy guard in the daytime and placed in cells at night. But later, when they were more trusted, they worked with only one soldier over them. One day on this wood fatigue Churchill and Hickcock persuaded their soldier guard to desert with them. When they reached the eastern shore, the two Hubbardton men returned to their home in search of their families.<sup>17</sup>

Colonels Seth Warner, Hale and Francis were left as a rear guard at Hubbardton by General St. Clair who was retreating with the main body of the troops through Castleton towards Skenesborough.<sup>18</sup> On July 7, 1777 the British caught up with the Americans and one of the bloodiest battles and one of the severest losses felt by the Continental army in the northern campaign was suffered that day at the Battle of Hubbardton. The troops left the field in pell-mell confusion, every man for himself.

15. Hemenway, A. M., *Historical Gazetteer of Vt.*, Vol. 3, pp. 750-751.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 751; Churchill, Amos, *History of Hubbardton*, pp. 5-6.

17. Hemenway, *op. cit.*, p. 751; Churchill, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

18. Whitehall, N.Y.

The people of Neshobe and Pittsford had heard the guns and seen some of the soldiers who had been forced to leave the field and find their way down the wooded mountain to safety. The men of the Otter Valley knew the last stronghold in the north had been lost with the surrender of Fort Ticonderoga and now they knew that Burgoyne's men in Hubbardton meant the war was at their very doorsteps and the entire state a frontier. All night long after the battle women and children and many of the men too, were on the move to safety somewhere southward. Many hid all their valuables in the woods for they did not know when the British might come down over the mountain too. Now the moment was ripe for more psychological warfare, more British propaganda, and Burgoyne seized that moment.<sup>19</sup>

On July 10, 1777 he issued and posted his proclamation. "A Proclamation. To the Inhabitants of Castleton, Hubberton, Rutland, Tinmouth, Powlet, Wells, Granville with the neighboring districts; also the districts bearing on White Creek, Cambden, Cambridge, &c. You are hereby directed to send from your several townships, deputies consisting of ten persons or more from each township, to meet Col. Skeene, at Castleton, on Monday, July 15, at 10 in the morning, who will have instructions, not only to give further encouragement to those who complied with the terms of my late manifesto but also to communicate conditions upon which the persons and properties of the disobedient may yet be spared. This fail to obey, under pain of military execution . . ."<sup>20</sup>

Food, horses and carriages were desperately needed. The manifesto had succeeded in terrorizing the lakeshore towns so completely that they had evacuated hastily and left the region without leaving a thing behind. Even the Loyalists in the area had failed to respond as expected and still more recruits were needed for the British army. Burgoyne found that more stringent methods were needed. He swept farther inland with his terrorism with more raids and more scavenging, striking fear into the hearts of the hesitant Tories and women and children. But at the same time he was stirring up a hatred among these rebels that was to break out in revenge at the Battle of Bennington on August 16, 1777.

Burgoyne had sent Lieutenant-Colonel Baum as well as Reidesel to

19. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford, Vt.* Rutland 1872, p. 118.

20. *Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society*, Concord 1827, Vol. 2, pp. 147-148.

plunder some of the inland towns,<sup>21</sup> and parties of Tories and British were sent along with his Indian raiders in order to curb their blood-thirsty desires.<sup>22</sup>

Late in July or early in August of 1777 many of the inhabitants were still out of the Otter Valley, having evacuated immediately after the Battle of Hubbardton, but one persistent Whig, Nathan Tuttle of Rutland, stayed behind to defy the Tories. Tuttle, who is said to have been a heavy drinker, was drunk when he met up with a party of Indians led by two Tories—Solomon Johns and Gustavus Spencer of Clarendon. Tuttle immediately started a row and dared them to take him. The taunts continued until Johns got so mad he ran Tuttle through with his bayonet and killed him. Spencer and Johns then tied stones to his body and threw it into the Creek below Gookins Falls.<sup>23</sup> After having disposed of the body they all went to Joseph Keeler's house nearby and told him the story, begging him to swear secrecy.

After the war Johns was killed in Canada by a falling tree and so Keeler felt that it was safe to publish the particulars of Tuttle's death.<sup>24</sup>

Late in September of the same year another foray was made in the Otter Valley as far up as Pittsford taking prisoner fifteen year old Joseph Rowley and his brother John, eleven. Only a few days later another party of Indians took Gideon Sheldon, fifteen, and his thirteen year old brother, Thomas. These two boys lived in Whipple Hollow, a bit south of Pittsford.<sup>25</sup>

Certainly these small boys could have done very little in the way of impeding the progress of the British. Either the Indians found the reward per head held good no matter what size the head, and that children made the easiest prisoners, or else it was part of the psychological warfare, or war of nerves.

The last attack to occur in September was made on Felix Powell's house in Pittsford. It was plundered and then burned to the ground

21. Burgoyne, Lieutenant-General, *A Narrative of the State of the Expedition*. 2nd London Edition 1780, Appendix lxii.

While Burgoyne was making arrangements to take Fort George and Fort Edward by building roads, boats, etc., he sent Captain Reidesel to make feints of a march to the Connecticut River and by other means spread alarm throughout the countryside.

22. *Ibid.*, Appendix xxxviii.

23. The falls in Otter Creek at Center Rutland.

24. Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County, Vt.* Syracuse 1886. Footnote to p. 319.

25. Caverly, *History of Pittsford*, p. 122.



in the night. Mrs. Powell managed to flee to safety through a thicket close by.<sup>26</sup>

Word of these recent incursions spread and a company of soldiers was sent into the region immediately. The company was raised in Clarendon at the advice of the Committee of Safety and was under the command of Captain Abraham Salisbury. The men in the company had been called from the neighboring towns—Neshobe, Pittsford, Clarendon, Rutland, Wallingford, etc.<sup>27</sup> and were sent particularly to try and bring back the lost children, but also to protect the inhabitants from further pillage. The Sheldon boys were carried to Canada where Thomas, the youngest of the two and a frail child, died in captivity. Gideon Sheldon and the two Rowley boys were imprisoned for a few months, but were then released and allowed to return home.<sup>28</sup>

It was only a short time after this alarm that most of the men who had evacuated this area during July had now returned and were discussing the location of a common place of protection. They chose a lot on the east bank of Otter Creek in Pittsford just south of the Neshobe line. Work on the fort began almost immediately. It was surrounded by a breastwork of hemlock logs driven in the ground like posts and pointed at the top. The west side of the breastwork extended down the bank of the Creek so that water could be drawn even if the fort was under siege. The fort was square and covered three quarters of an acre of land with a log house in the center to serve as a block house.<sup>29</sup>

The fort was named after Deacon John Mott, who lived just north of the fort over the line in Neshobe and who often acted as com-

26. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

27. The following is the roll call of men in Capt. Salisbury's company: Capt. A. Salisbury, Capt. Thomas Sawyer, Sergt. Joseph Smith, Sergt. Jedediah Jackson, Sergt. Jabez Weaver, Sergt. Zebidiah Green, Clerk Asable Blanchard, Sylvanus Brown, Noel Potter, Ebenezer White, Samuel Waters, Thomas Tuttle, Jacob Partridge, Nehemiah Angell, William Cox, Abel Spencer, Thomas Curtis, Edward Owen, Daniel Niles, Benjamin Foster, Oliver Arnold, Jesse Place, John Squire, Peter Tarbox, Nathaniel Place, Abadiah Gill, William Rounds, Joseph Barker, Obediah Edwards, Jona. Eddy, Silas and Silas Whitney, Jr., Benj. Stevens, Joseph Williams, Joel Foster, Peter Eddy, Thos. Eddy, Levi Calvin, David Warner, Azariah Brooks, James Rounds, Matthew Cox, Noah Bush, Wallis Sutherland, Nathaniel Skelter, James Smith, Mark Jeney, Jonah Ives, Newton Drury, Ebenezer Cooley, James Edwards, Daniel Stevens, Abel Stevens, Samuel Williams, Ezekiel Clark, Elihu Allen, Joseph Jackson.

28. Caverly, *History of Pittsford*, p. 124.

29. Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County*, p. 733.

mander.<sup>30</sup> Mott had come to Neshobe from Richmond, Massachusetts in 1775 and was an highly esteemed man in his own town of Neshobe. He was deacon of the Baptist Church there and was a representative to the General Assembly as well as a lieutenant in Lt. Thomas Lee's company in 1776.<sup>31</sup>

Fort Mott was still under construction in November of 1777 when the two Robbins brothers, George and Aaron, of Neshobe were killed and scalped by a large party of Indians. The Indians were on their way to Pittsford to surprise the new fort and possibly demolish it, or at least test its strength. The two Robbins boys had been hunting early that morning with two other men from town, Peter Whelan and a man by the name of Carley. By the time they had come home to eat they were warned to run for their lives because there were Indians lurking in the swamp just north of their cabin.

Mrs. Robbins told the men that she thought there were only about six or eight. Both of the Robbins boys were professional hunters and excellent marksmen so when they heard this they were not particularly alarmed. They did, however, have George stand guard while the rest of them ate. It was not very long after this that the Indians appeared over the hill to the north. Evidently not many came out into the open at first for George risked firing a shot. As soon as he did a volley was returned, one of the shots hitting him. Aaron, Whelan and Carley rushed out to pick up George and pull him back to the safety of the cabin, but George told them to go on without him for he was dying. The three men then made a dash for the river and the woods on the other side. Aaron was the last to leap the river and was having trouble getting through the tangle of underbrush and alders on the opposite

30. Caverly, *op. cit.*, p. 122. Mott probably held command of the fort up until the spring of 1778 when Capt. Ebenezer Allen was placed in charge of the garrison. Records from the *Vermont State Papers*, Vol. 8, p. 388 show Allen to be in charge: "Neshobe 11th April 1778. Theas May Sartify to whome it May Consarne that I Rec'd 1007 of Board, Capt. Tuttle for the yous of my Detachment under My Command. Ebe<sup>n</sup>. Allen Capt Comadent, £ 6:0:0.

"Neshobe 13th April 1778. Elisha Strong's Acct for Servis Don for the Public. To three Days work with three men and Eight oxen to transport three Barrels of Pork and three Casks flower Containing 95 lb N<sup>t</sup> Wait Tare 93 <sup>1b</sup> and (illegible) from Rutland to Pittsford, at ten Dollars p<sup>r</sup> Day for Each team (viz) two teams—£ 18:0:0 to two teeames with three men and eight oxen one Day to Cart hay from Neshobe to Pittsford for the fat Cattel that was for Capt Allens Department £ 6:0:0."

31. Hemenway, A. M., *Gazetteer of Vermont*, Vol. 3, p. 440. Goodrich, John E., *Revolutionary Rolls of the State of Vermont*, Rutland 1904, p. 14.

bank when he was hit by a tomahawk thrown by one of the Indians. He fell backwards into the river and they rushed up and killed him.<sup>32</sup>

Carley was the only one to escape and spread the alarm, which was ultimately carried to Fort Mott. Peter Whelan, known as an "underwitted fellow," was caught by the Indians. It was supposed at that time, however, that Indians believed halfwits were protected by a god and that no harm could come to them. In any event Peter Whelan was released after the warriors had had a bit of fun with him. They sent him back to town in a pair of woman's stays laced on upside down and drawn so tight that he could not get out of them.<sup>33</sup>

This party of raiders did not press on against Fort Mott even though they numbered approximately 150. It was thought in town that the Indians feared the Robbins boys had been an outguard for a larger group laying in ambush. Perhaps, too, they felt that the element of surprise so necessary to a successful assault on the fort was now gone.<sup>34</sup>

Continuous massacres, kidnappings and forays led to the reading of the following report in Council at Arlington, in the Spring of the following year: "State of Vermont, In Council, Arlington, 22d Ap<sup>l</sup> 1778. We have Rec<sup>d</sup> a petition from the Inhabitants of the Towns on Otter Creek North of Pittsford dated April 13, 1778; and having Considered the Petition & their Circumstances do advise said inhabitants that as Soon as the Come within our Lines, they improve the Opportunity. It does not at present appear to this Council, that we can Guard further North than Pittsford & Castleton. Therefore you will Conduct yourselves accordingly. We shall give orders to the officers now Commanding our party to the North, & shall continue such orders to any officer Commanding by Commission under this State, to give all possible assistants to you in moving until to have had an opportunity to have come in, which if you do not improve you may expect to be Treated as enemies."<sup>35</sup>

After the fall of Fort Ticonderoga on July 6, 1777 the northern

32. Hemenway, A. M., *Gazetteer of Vermont*, Vol. 3, pp. 441-442.

33. Hall, Henry. Mss from the collection of. In the library of the Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier, Vt. Hemenway, A. M., *Gazetteer of Vermont*, Vol. 3, p. 442.

34. Hemenway, A. M. *op. cit.*, p. 442.

Henry Hall mentions that these Indians were in the vicinity of Neshobe most of the day, lurking about and taunting the townspeople to come out and fight.

35. Walton, E. P., *Records of the Governor and Council of the State of Vermont*. Montpelier 1880, Vol. 1, p. 252.

frontier shrunk southward. The Continental Army could no longer be responsible for those towns and people which were north of Fort Mott at Pittsford or Fort Ranger at Rutland. This last fort, built in the summer of 1778 just east of Gookins Falls on the Otter Creek, covered two acres, had a two story block house, and housed a permanent garrison. Another fort was eventually built between April 2nd and May 14th, 1779 at Castleton to form the western flank of a new defended frontier. This last fort was called Fort Warren in honor of Colonel Guideon Warren of Tinmouth, who was Colonel in the 5th Regiment of Vermont Militia at the time.<sup>36</sup>

By February 25, 1779 the General Assembly had met, formed a Board of War and granted it powers to raise men in any number to defend the frontiers. From this time on the Northern Frontier became more than an imaginary line. By authority of the newly formed Board of War it was resolved on the 12th of March 1779 that "The west line of Castleton and the west and north lines of Pittsford to the foot of the Green Mountains be established as a line between the inhabitants and the enemy."<sup>37</sup>

All the inhabitants north of this line were again told to move. However, the Board of War recommended "that the women and children should be removed to some convenient place south of the forts, and that the men with such parts of their stocks as might be necessary should remain on their farms, and work in collective bodies, with arms."<sup>38</sup>

In spite of this warning the women as well as the men stayed in some of the towns north of the frontier. In Neshobe in particular the town records indicate that settlers were there throughout the Revolution, proprietors' meetings held and birth records recorded.<sup>39</sup>

Before recounting the next Indian and Tory raid, which struck

36. Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County*, p. 525.

37. Hall, Hiland, *Early History of Vermont*. Albany 1868, p. 284. From here on in this account the term Northern Frontier will mean that true line of defense between the inhabitants of Vermont and the enemy to the north—that line extending from Fort Warren in the west to the foot of the Green Mountains at Fort Vengeance.

38. Hall, Hiland, *op. cit.*, pp. 284.

39. *Brandon Town Records*, Vol. 1. Children born of Anna Simonds and Amos Cutler who were married Nov. 25, 1773: Jacob, born Aug. 18, 1774; Sarah, born Aug. 29, 1776; and Jacob, born Feb. 2, 1781.

Hemenway, A. M., *Gazetteer of Vermont*, Vol. 3, p. 443. Daughter born to Joseph Barker and wife during September 1778 in Neshobe; another daughter, Rhoda, born November 22, 1779.

in the Otter Valley and probably was the most extensive in the state before the burning of Royalton,<sup>40</sup> it is necessary to describe the method and effectiveness of Tory infiltration. The Tories were the Trojan Horse—the Fifth Column of the British. These men who had once lived as neighbors with the now rebellious colonists knew every house, road, bypath and hideout in their native towns. They were some of the cleverest and most effective fighters in Burgoyne's army—pilfering, burning, alarming and undermining the morale of the Vermont settlers. These Loyalists could often spy without being detected, for many Loyalists were non-belligerent and remained home on their farms secretly aiding the British cause by selling produce or information about the activities of the insurgents. Then, too, only about one third of the colonists in America were in arms at any one time, many of them fighting for a term and returning, thus making it even more difficult to tell a neighbor's sympathies.

I have been careful to indicate that up until this time nearly all the Indian raids showed signs of Tory leadership, association or origination. Usually these parties came directly from Burgoyne's headquarters on Lake Champlain or later from Canada via Lake Champlain. There were always plenty of Indians in each group and probably the bloodiest deeds were theirs, but the real conniving and best led raids were led by Tories who knew where, when and whom to strike. If they were afraid some of their old friends in their home town might recognize them they painted their faces to resemble the Indians.<sup>41</sup>

By May of 1777 some Tories had openly declared their sympathies and were making their way out of Vermont to join the British in Canada. One such party of Tories led by Benjamin Cole passed through Pittsford and Neshobe. Evidently Whig spies spotted them and spread the news, for Captain James Bently with a few others set out to capture them. On his way through the Creek towns Bently was able to recruit twenty-two new men.

Scouts had informed Bently that the Tories had gone as far as Monkton where they were camping in a deep pine woods on the outskirts of town. He waited until he thought them asleep and then he and his men rushed them, shouting and making a terrific noise at

40. On October 16, 1780 a party of 300 Indians led by a British lieutenant struck at Royalton—killed two persons, took twenty-five prisoners, burned twenty houses and as many barns, and killed 150 head of cattle, sheep and hogs. *History of Vermont*, Zadock Thompson (Part 2, pp. 68-69).

41. The sneak attack at Hubbardton on July 6, 1777, led by Sherwood, was made up of Tories painted to look like their Indian conspirators.

the same time. They took all thirteen of the Tories prisoners and the next day marched them all back to Neshobe where a special court convened to examine them.<sup>42</sup> After two and one half days of investigation the prisoners were ordered to be delivered over to the garrison at Fort Ticonderoga. Captain Bently and his men marched them there.

Many of the raids and scouting tours up through the Otter Valley and particularly upon the towns of Neshobe and Pittsford were led by one of the most adroit and thorough Loyalists active in the British northern campaign.<sup>43</sup> It was the very Stevens who led the party of Indians in the burning and plunder of Neshobe on November 20, 1779 and in a series of incursions upon his own town, Pittsford, and the farms of his former friends and neighbors.

Roger Stevens, Jr. of Pittsford was the son of Roger Stevens, Sr. and one of a family of six children—Ephraim, Elihu, Moses, Merriam, and Abel. Abel also turned Tory like his brother, Roger, to be able to work in conspiracy with him. Their home was on the west side of the Otter Creek.<sup>44</sup>

Roger came to know the country in the Otter Valley years before the outbreak of the War, for it was recorded in the town records of Neshobe as early as November 10, 1773 that Roger Stevens of Pittsford sold his right and title to land in Neshobe to one Abraham Hard of Dorset (then proprietor's clerk of Neshobe).<sup>45</sup> It was also stated in the clerk's records that, at a meeting held by the proprietors at the home of Nathaniel Daniels in Neshobe on September 6, 1774, they "Voted that Elisha Strong and Roger Stevens are to have the privilege of the Lowermost Falls on Neshobe River to build a Saw Mill and Grist Mill (the saw mill to go by the first of January next) and the grist mill to be built within two years from this date, and if accomplished within the Term of two years they are to have the privileges given them."<sup>46</sup>

He evidently went off to war as a Tory before he finished either,

42. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, p. 116. Trials for all Tories were usually conducted by seven men, selected from three different Committees of Safety, but in the case of this trial held at Neshobe only five men sat in: Thomas Tuttle, Timothy Barker, Jonathan Rowley, Moses Olmstead and John Smith.

43. For a more complete account of the activities of Roger Stevens, Jr. with the British in other adventures see Cruikshank, E. A. "Adventures of Roger Stevens" in *Proceedings of Ontario Historical Society*, Vol. XXXIII, pp. 11-38.

44. Hall, Henry. Mss. from the collection of.

45. Brandon Town Records, Vol. 1.

46. Brandon Town Records, Vol. 1.

for later the following notation was entered at a proprietor's meeting on October 4, 1780: "Voted to choose a committee of three men to take care of the Mill Place in Neshobe where Roger Stevens partly built mills and to dispose of the privilege to some person who shall undertake for to build the mills with 5 acres of land around the falls where Roger Stevens set the saw mill."<sup>47</sup>

When Stevens turned Tory at the outbreak of the War and joined the British, he left his wife and baby daughter at home in Pittsford to fend for themselves and take any ridicule the towns people might throw at them. Stevens relates his own position and his own sympathies in a memorial address to General Haldimand dated April 2, 1784. In it he described how he owned 3,000 acres of land in Vermont on which he had already built two mills and nearly finished a third.<sup>48</sup>

He claimed to have been acquainted with Ethan Allen and to have played an active part in the great controversy between Vermont and New York over land patents. He had been elected by his neighbors to be a captain of a company of militia, but that he had refused to take an oath against his government which the Revolutionary Committee required. They then gave him six weeks to make a decision. But since he was unable to see it their way, his house was surrounded one night by armed men and he was taken a prisoner to Litchfield, Connecticut where other Loyalists were being held.<sup>49</sup>

Stevens escaped from prison there and joined the army of General Burgoyne at his headquarters in Skenesborough (Whitehall, N.Y.) in July of 1777, and was immediately put in service. He acted as a guide for the German troops under Major General Reidesel in their move towards Castleton. Burgoyne used him to collect all the teams and wagons he could lay his hands on. Teams and wagons were desperately need for the portage from Skenesborough to the Hudson and Burgoyne chose Stevens to procure them because he knew the surrounding country so well. Stevens was so successful at his job that he was made wagon-master and cattle purchasing agent for the company and remained with the British army up until their surrender at Stillwater on October 17, 1777.<sup>50</sup>

After the surrender he set out through the woods to make his way back to his family at Pittsford, but was taken prisoner again and placed with other Loyalists at Bennington. His brother Abel was able to

47. *Ibid.*

48-49. *Proceedings of the Ontario Historical Society*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 11.

50-52. *Proceedings of the Ontario Historical Society*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 12.

help him make an escape from here. However, since it was no longer safe for a Tory to walk in public, Roger Stevens gathered his family, along with William Campbell and his family (making up a party of twenty-three), and they all set off for Canada, arriving at St. Jean in March of 1778.<sup>51</sup>

Major Christopher Carleton was in command of the garrison at St. Jean and he found Stevens useful as a guide on exploring and foraging trips up Lake Champlain to Otter Creek. Stevens worked at this from October 24th to November 13th and nearly all his expeditions were successful. At this time, however, Stevens was perhaps playing a double game, hoping to find a better berth, because General Haldimand (through Carleton) was forced to warn him not to correspond with his brother Abel in Pittsford, except through friends of the Government (i.e. Crown).<sup>52</sup>

Stevens' next sortie from there was in guiding a second expedition from Isle aux Noix under Carleton. They took Fort Ann, Fort George and many prisoners from both.<sup>53</sup>

In the Spring of the following year on May 1, 1779 Lt.-Col. Robert Rogers (once of the famed Rogers' Rangers) had to recruit two battalions of able-bodied rangers from the colonies. Major James Rogers, younger brother of Robert, was to be in command of one of these two battalions and Roger Stevens was to be his recruiting officer. Stevens managed to enlist twenty-three men. Probably a large portion of these enlistees were made up from the prisoners taken at Fort George and Fort Ann, but undoubtedly many were recruited from the country he knew so well along the Otter Creek. Stevens was sent with his new recruits to Pointe au Fer on Lake Champlain to establish an observation post.<sup>54</sup> This was to be the most advanced outpost of the British for obtaining intelligence as well as more recruits from Vermont and New York. He was there for four months during the winter of 1780-1781.<sup>55</sup>

Almost without exception, from the time he joined the British at Skenesborough until the close of the Revolution, Roger Stevens kept in touch with his brother Abel. Abel remained in Pittsford and continued his work as a professional hunter and trapper to avoid any suspicion. As a hunter he had opportunity to pass through the lines of

53. *Proceedings of the Ontario Historical Society*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 12.

54. For a more complete account of the activities carried on at Pointe au Fer see Walter Hill Crockett, *History of Vt.*, Vol. 1, p. 489.

55. *Ibid.*



the Committee of Safety with a pass which was good anywhere at any time. In this manner Abel kept his brother posted on the movements of the colonists, their strength and numbers, and their plans.

Numerous accounts substantiate the fact that Roger Stevens was leading most of the incursions in the Otter Valley. Caverly notes in his *History of Pittsford* that Roger Stevens often led independent parties as far up Otter Creek as Pittsford. On nearly every one of these sorties he would try to find a way to visit his family before returning.<sup>56</sup> Caverly also describes a small raiding party of British, Tories and Indians that came over from Lake Champlain to Pittsford in November of 1778. When the towns people learned they were on their way against Pittsford they all scurried to the safety of Fort Mott. The party went first to Roger Stevens' house where Mrs. Stevens was living alone with her baby daughter. An Indian seized the baby and was about to dash its head against the stones of the chimney when someone told him that the baby's father was in the British service. The historian then goes on to state (rather dubiously, if we are to believe Burgoyne's account of his Indians) that the red man smilingly handed the baby back to its mother and the whole party departed.<sup>57</sup>

In this same year 1778 it was decided at a meeting of the General Assembly that all the personal property of men like Roger Stevens, who had deserted the cause of their country, was to be confiscated. The local Councils of Safety were to appoint a commissioner in their respective towns to do it.<sup>58</sup> It is quite possible the commissioner in Pittsford was Roger Stevens' own father for there is an entry in the records that Roger Stevens, Sr. procured \$1100.00 from his son's estate at his own expense and trouble and turned it over to the state. The entry is dated March 23, 1779.<sup>59</sup>

Although the British had evacuated Fort Ticonderoga and Crown Point and Burgoyne had surrendered his army at Stillwater, the Northern Frontier was still open to the ravages of British, Indian and Tory guerrilla bands during 1778. On June 13th of this year a scouting party of 500 men were in the vicinity of Crown Point<sup>60</sup> and by fall a

56. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, p. 148.

57. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, pp. 132-133.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

59. Nye, *State Papers of Vermont*, Vol. 6, p. 257. Mrs. Nye also has recorded an account of property sold in Pittsford at public vendue on Feb. 10, 1778 (just a month before Roger Stevens and his family left Pittsford for Canada). See p. 275.

60. Caverly, A. M., *op. cit.*, p. 131.

large British force had come up the Lake in several vessels and thoroughly scoured the country on both sides.<sup>61</sup>

By May of 1779 Fort Mott was altered and the commander informed by the officer in charge at Fort Ranger that a force was coming up Lake Champlain to harass the settlers. With all probability this was Roger Stevens moving up with his new recruits to the advanced British post at Pointe au Fer. A scouting party was sent out from Fort Mott to bring back intelligence. The leader of the party that left the fort was Ephraim Stevens, Roger's brother, and others in the group were Benjamin Stevens, Jr., Roger's cousin, Ebenezer Hopkins and Johnathan Rowley, Jr.<sup>62</sup>

Although ordered not to cross the Lake when they got there, Ephraim led his men across in their canoe to Fort Ticonderoga. They were all young boys and probably curious so they spent some time reconnoitering the fort before paddling on down the Lake as far as Basin Harbor. They landed here and scouted about, but found no signs of Indians. In youthful glee they shoved off in their canoe all firing their muskets into the air. Almost immediately a party of Indians appeared on the shore and ordered them to come back. The boys refused while trying all the time to escape to the center of the Lake midst a shower of bullets. The Indians, however, had a canoe hidden along shore and so quickly pursued them. One Indian lay flat in the prow of his canoe and took a fixed aim. His shot hit young Johnathan Rowley in the head, killing him. The rest found that they were not going to be able to escape and surrendered. The Indians scalped Rowley first and then took their prisoners ashore. The three remaining boys were led through the woods in an overland journey, ultimately arriving in Quebec.<sup>63</sup>

In the fall of 1780 the boys managed to escape, but were recaptured somewhere near the headwaters of the Connecticut River by Indians and brought back to Quebec. Again in the winter of 1781, after one unsuccessful attempt, they were able to break out. They traveled over snow and in severe weather until they were within one day's trip of Vermont. Here they met up with some British who sent them back to Quebec.<sup>64</sup>

It was not until June of 1782 that Benjamin Stevens, Sr. heard that some prisoners were to be exchanged at Skenesborough. He still had

61. Smith, H. P., *History of Addison County*, Syracuse 1886, p. 581.

62. Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County*, p. 734.

63-65. Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County*, p. 734.

hopes of seeing his son again, so he went there. The first prisoner off from the boat was his son Benjamin. Ephraim Stevens and Ebenezer Hopkins were also exchanged at the same time.<sup>65</sup>

The second raid on Neshobe fell on November 20, 1779<sup>66</sup> and was the second most destructive Indian raid in the state—second only to the burning of Royalton. It is difficult to find out how much of the town was destroyed, but probably all of the houses east of the Neshobe River. By comparison with the Brandon of today the loss seems slight, as there were only about eighteen to twenty families at that time (though they ran large, with sometimes as many as ten or twelve children). But with the threat of recurrent attacks on other towns, the loss and danger was none the less real. The raiders set fire to the homes and out buildings of Captain Thomas Tuttle, his son, Solomon Tuttle and his son-in-law, Joseph Barker. They also plundered and stole all their food, clothing and livestock. Even the mills on the Neshobe River that had been partially built by Roger Stevens and Elisha Strong were burned. Barker, himself, was taken a prisoner, but managed to slip away when the Indians had camped for the night and his two guards had fallen asleep.<sup>67</sup>

Mrs. Barker fled from her house with her fourteen-month-old daughter in her arms in the direction of the home of Noah Strong, about three miles away. However, at dark, finding herself completely exhausted before she had gone half of the way, she spent the night in the deserted cabin of George and Aaron Robbins. That night she gave birth to a daughter and it was here that Captain Tuttle and the others who made up the small searching party found her the next day.<sup>68</sup>

66. I have given the date, which has never been stated before, as Nov. 20, 1779 on the basis of the accounts in mss. from the Henry Hall collection in the Vermont Historical Society and also from records in Goodrich's *Revolutionary Rolls of Vt.* Hall states that it was on the night following the raid that Col. Claghorn and his men pursued the Indians. Goodrich gives the day of the arrival of Capt. Wright's Co. as two days after the raid. (Goodrich: "A pay roll of Capt. Simeon Wright's Company of Militia in Col. Gideon Warren's Regiment for an alarm at Neshobe for 3 days in the month of November ye 22d.")

67. Hemenway, A. M., *Historical Gazetteer of Vt.*, Vol. 3, pp. 442-444.

68. "In the account of this affair (the burning of Neshobe) as published in Thompson's *Gazetteer* there is an error as to the time when it occurred. It is there stated to have been in 1777, at the time when the Robinses were killed, whereas it was two years later, as is shown by the record of this extraordinary birth. Besides, the only other child she had, then about fourteen months old, was born in Sept. 1778, nearly a year after the Robinses were killed. The time of Mrs. Barker's marriage too, being Jan. 13, 1777, as appears of record, is sufficient

The raiding party undoubtedly came up Otter Creek, or along the Indian Trail which bordered the Creek, for only those homes which were not far distant from the waterway and in a direct line with Fort Mott were burned.

The day after the surprise attack on Neshobe and the burning of the town, the news had spread over half of the surrounding country—quite a feat considering the means of communication and transportation. By night men and soldiers had come from Clarendon, Tinmouth, Castleton, and East and West Rutland. They came up to Neshobe along the east bank of the Creek through Pittsford.<sup>69</sup> A great deal of the existing town must have been burned and the repercussion great to cause such wide spread agitation and alarm.

When the men gathered that night (November 21) a general meeting was held and they discussed the situation. Proposals were put forth as to the best means of overtaking the enemy. As the night drew on the gathering increased to a force of 400 men and James Claghorn of Rutland was in command. Claghorn held the commission of Lieutenant-Colonel from the governor; however, in spite of whatever previous notoriety he held as a military man, he had been called up in such haste this time that he had neglected to make provisions for supplying rations and canoes for the men. The Indians had escaped to the west side of the Creek and the canoes were needed for ferrying the men across.

In spite of the lack of preparedness the men were anxious to get started and did not want to wait until Claghorn could remedy his carelessness. They trudged along the eastern bank of the Creek all night trying in the darkness to find a place to cross. Joshua Pratt, one of the men from West Rutland, asked Colonel Claghorn:

“You will be sure the canoes get down, won’t you?”

Claghorn answered: “We know our own business.”

“You do, or ought to,” said Joshua.

to settle the question.” (Miss A. M. Hemenway in her *Historical Gazetteer of Vt.*, Vol. 3, p. 443.)

“It was in November or December of 1779 that the enemy might have been taken when Brandon was burned if Clagon (Claghorn) had done his duty as I have often been credibly informed by some of those who were present and by one not many years passed a Wm. Jerimust Parker who said he was with Clagon (Claghorn); who lived in Whiting but is now dead.” (Caleb Hendee of Pittsford in a letter to Henry Hall of Rutland, from the collection of mss. in the Vermont Historical Society.)

69. Hall, Henry, Mss. Collection of. In the library of the Vermont Historical Society.

Claghorn, however, had a reputation for being inefficient and the men had suspicions of his not wanting to overtake the enemy.<sup>70</sup>

In the meantime one Benjamin Cooley and another Cooley (Ebenezer?) went back the four miles to Pittsford to get two canoes and return with them.

While the Cooleys were gone the other men tore boards off from a barn on one of the Creek meadows and made a raft to ferry themselves across on. On the second trip across, Silas Pratt, Joshua's brother was just stepping off when the raft started to sink with twelve other men aboard; in another minute it went to pieces. They all managed to get to shore through the icy waters except for one man who could not swim. He kept himself afloat by lying across a board, but the current was rapidly carrying him down stream despite his calls for help. However, some of the party managed to run out a long stick to him and pull him ashore.

The men were so mad at Claghorn for his negligence in not procuring canoes in time that they called him "Granny" Claghorn and when marching behind him would tread on his heels and do anything else that would hurry him along.

At sunrise they approached Brown's Camp in Sudbury.<sup>71</sup> They all stopped on top of a hill overlooking the camp, inspected the priming of their guns and then made a rush down the hill. Unfortunately, the Indians had gone just about an hour before the men arrived. The men felt that the rally had been in vain—the enemy had slipped away from them leaving the air full of feathers, and hogs both killed and still in their pens. Hardly any of the precious meal they had stolen was carried away with them. As the party looked back across the Great Swamp and the lowland meadows towards Neshobe they could see the still burning hay stacks and the flaming and smoking ruins of the cabins of the homeless families.<sup>72</sup>

James Claghorn must have lost all the respect of his men and many of his countrymen after his fiasco at Neshobe, for he was taunted in public on many occasions afterwards. Elijah Smith who had been with

70. Hall, Henry, Mss. Collection of. In the library of the Vermont Historical Society.

71. Brown's Camp was located in Sudbury on the west bank of the Creek at the foot of Miller Hill, a few rods north of where the covered bridge now stands. There was a good spring there and the site was probably a fine camping place within easy access of the great highway of the French and Indian War—The Indian Trail, along Otter Creek.

72. Hall, Henry, Mss. in the collection of.

Claghorn said: "I have often seen the tears run down the cheeks of brother Daniel and Nathaniel Blanchard, talking about the escape of the Indians who burned Brandon. They blamed Claghorn chiefly, Sawyer some. If they had commanded the scout the Indians wouldn't have escaped."<sup>73</sup>

Silas Pratt, who had fallen into the Creek that cold night, said: "The next spring we dropped Claghorn and elected Thomas Lee of Rutland, Lieutenant-Colonel."<sup>74</sup>

On November 22nd a relief company was sent to Neshobe and it stayed in the area for three days. It was a company of Colonel Gideon Warren's Regiment and had been sent to try and locate the enemy, and also to stand by to protect the town from any further incursions if the Indians should return. Captain Wright and the regular lieutenant of this company were absent at the time, so Ensign Nathaniel Blanchard was placed in charge.<sup>75</sup>

Evidently this raiding and burning of Neshobe caused a great deal of unrest and fear among the towns lying on or directly behind the Northern Frontier. It is noted in the record of the Board of War, which met at Arlington on April 7, 1780: "Resolved that the Board accept the report of their Committee respecting building a fort at Pitsford, &c.

"Resolved that said fort be built near the north line of Pitsford where Majr Ebenr Allen shall judge proper; That said fort be a Piquet with proper flankers, sufficient for one hundred and fifty men Inclosed; That such fort be accomplished as soon as may be."<sup>76</sup>

Almost immediately the men in the Pittsford-Neshobe area began work on a new fort, larger and better situated and stronger than Fort Mott. It was located upon high ground due east of Fort Mott and

73. Hall, Henry, Mss. in the collection of. In the library of the Vermont Historical Society.

74. *Ibid.* Henry Hall has preserved two other accounts of Claghorn. Once when he was visiting in Tinmouth, Major Rice twitted him of cravenness and Claghorn tried to lick Rice for it, but he ended up by being beaten himself.

Another time when the militia were drinking at the tavern of John Hopson Johnson, near Fort Ranger, to celebrate the election of Thomas Lee as their new commandant, Claghorn came up to Lee and told him that when the regiment met for action it would be Claghorn who would take command.

"You will, will ye, Claghorn?"

"Yes I will!"

"If you do, I'll draw my sword and hew you as Samuel did Agag."

75. Goodrich, John E., *Revolutionary Roll of Vermont*.

76. Walton, E. P., *Governor and Council*, Vol. 2, p. 28.

almost directly upon the eastern branch of the Crown Point Road. It was a picket fort with a trench five or six feet deep surrounding it. Trunks of beech and maple trees, about twelve to eighteen inches through and about eighteen feet high, were pointed at the top and set into the ground. They were set as closely together as possible, but to make sure that there were no gaps a stake was wedged in between each log. Although Fort Warren at Castleton was the nominal headquarters on the Northern Frontier, the fort at Pittsford was every bit as strong and every bit as important.<sup>77</sup>

Behind the pickets was a breastwork of mud and logs six feet broad and at a certain height in this breastwork loopholes were left between the logs so that a muzzle of a gun could be pushed through when taking aim. However, the holes were made high enough so that even if the enemy were firing from directly below the shots would pass harmlessly over the soldier's head in the fort.<sup>78</sup>

On each corner of the fort was a two story flanker with loopholes above and below. On the east side there was a large double gate of oak planking studded with large nail heads to make it bullet-proof, and on the west side was a wicket.<sup>79</sup>

Inside the fort against the north wall was the officers' barracks; directly opposite on the south wall was the enlisted men's barracks; and in the northeast corner was a small frame building used expressly as an ammunition magazine. The parade ground or drilling area lay between the two barracks. In the northeast and southeast corners were wells. This was a decided improvement over Fort Mott where the soldiers had to crawl down the bank of the Creek for water.<sup>80</sup>

When the fort was completed Major Ebenezer Allen was placed in command with a garrison of one hundred and fifty men. Up until this time the fort was known only as Pittsford Fort, but Henry Hall preserved the following anecdote to describe the manner in which the fort received its final name.

Caleb Houghton, aged thirty, one of the soldiers comprising the garrison under Major Allen, left the fort one day unarmed to visit a neighbor's house. He never returned, but as Houghton had bragged among the men that he would never be taken alive by Indians and allow himself to be put to their torture, a party of men was sent out from the fort to look for him.

Houghton was found about a half mile from the fort. He had evi-

77-79. Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County*, pp. 735-736.

80. Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County*, pp. 735-736.

dently been ambushed for a shot had been fired so close to him that the wadding was still in the wound. He had also been tomahawked, scalped and run through with a sword. When Major Allen learned of this atrocity he was so outraged that he sent a searching party out for several days, but they were unable to locate the enemy.

It was at this time that Major Allen gathered his men together at the fort in front of the large double gate on the east side and declared vengeance against all and every Indian that came within his power. He then took up a bottle of rum, stepped forward and dashed it against the studded gate, at the same time christening the new fort, Fort Vengeance.<sup>81</sup>

It is difficult to ascertain when the fort was fully completed; perhaps it went up by stages, covering a period of years, but being used to some extent at all times. Smith and Rann set the date of completion as 1780<sup>82</sup> but the Board of War meeting at Arlington on July 14, 1780 “. . . granted 5 fatigue men to assist the Barrack's Master at the fourt on the North Line of Pitsford” in making 20,000 brick to build chimneys in both the officers' and enlisted men's barracks.<sup>83</sup> And even as late as June 23, 1781, the Board met at Bennington and considered the removal of Fort Vengeance back to the old site of Fort Mott<sup>84</sup> (hardly an economical measure if Fort Vengeance were already built).

This same year (1780) the Board of War took extra measures to link the Northern Frontier more securely, and on April 7th at Arlington: “Resolved that a Picquet fourt with proper flankers be built at Hubbardton near Boardman's place where Majr Ebenr Allen shall pitch; that there be Barracks sufficient for seventy-five men Inclosed; to be completed as soon as may be.”<sup>85</sup>

81. Hall, Henry, Mss. in the collection of.

82. Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County*, p. 736.

83. Walton, E. P., *Governor and Council*, Vol. 2, p. 35.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 109. “We the subscribers being desiared by the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Bord of War to visit the frontiers of the State of Vermont and report wherein our opine the garrisons ought to be built for the best defence of the above State.

“Begg leave to report first that the garrisons at Pitsford ought to be removed back from the place where it now stands nigh Sutherland's mills or such particular spot as Col<sup>o</sup> Fletcher shall direct. . . . That the fortification at Castleton as it is most likely will be considered Hed Quarters ought to be much the largest . . . (Signed) Roger Enos, Samuel Fletcher, Samuel Herrick, Gideon Armsbury.”

85. Walton, E. P., *Governor and Council*, Vol. 2, p. 28. There seems to be no evidence that this fort ever went beyond the planning stage.



An alarm was received at the new Fort Vengeance on March 23, 1780 and it lasted until March 28th. Captain Benjamin Cooley's Company from Colonel Ebenezer Allen's Regiment was called out. This was only the first of many alerts and actual attacks to be felt in the Otter Valley in 1780.<sup>86</sup>

During the month of May of this same year the enemy came up Lake Champlain and attacked the country in the region of the Mohawk Valley in New York. The governor of New York and the Albany Militia set out for Lake George hoping to intercept the British on their return. In the meantime the governor had sent an appeal to Major Ebenezer Allen, as well as to the officers in command of the militia in and near Castleton to join him at Ticonderoga. This alarm lasted from May 30th to June 6th.<sup>87</sup>

By July the Indian and Tory marauding parties were again around Pittsford. This time they took Isaac Matson a prisoner to Canada.<sup>88</sup>

Again the Indians and Tories returned in July. This time it was definitely proved that the Tory leading this party of four Indians into Pittsford was Roger Stevens, Jr. These raiders had been hiding in ambush behind a rock so that when Samuel Crippen rode by on horseback they were able to jump out and seize his horse. The Indians cut the horse's throat and then smeared the blood over their hands and face. Samuel Crippen was pulled behind the rock and held prisoner there.

A few minutes later Mrs. Joshua June and her sister Betsy Cox came along each on horseback. Mrs. June had her baby son in her lap. The Indians and Roger Stevens rushed out from behind the rock and tried to catch both of them. Mrs. June who was riding in front managed to escape. Betsy Cox, however, was captured and her horse's throat cut too. The party then took Crippen and Miss Cox with them northwards over Cox Mountain in order to steer clear of the fort. They were making their way toward a camping ground about a mile north-east of Neshobe.<sup>89</sup>

Roger Stevens persuaded the Indians to release Betsy Cox, but warned her to return home slowly. Shortly after she was out of sight of them she met up with a fierce looking Indian fully armed and acting as a rear guard for the retreating group. When he saw the food she was carrying, given to her by the others, he took it from her as a sort of pass and let her go on her way.<sup>90</sup>

86.-88. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, pp. 158-159.

89. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, p. 161.

90. Hall, Henry, Mss. in the collection of.

When the news of this abduction was known, Captain John Spofford was sent with an additional force to protect the inhabitants in that area. Captain Spofford's men remained on the alert from August 4th to August 18th. They set out after the retreating Indians and their Tory leader, but were never able to catch up with them. Crippen therefore reached Canada a prisoner.<sup>91</sup>

By the fall of 1780 the committee on the frontiers was able to report (on October 16th) that there were about one hundred and fifty men in garrisons at Pittsford and Castleton, but that four hundred men ought to be raised immediately, of which three hundred and fifty should be assigned to Pittsford and Castleton.<sup>92</sup> This was proof enough that Neshobe and Pittsford and that portion of the Otter Valley were still on the main highway of invasion from Canada. Otter Creek was the silent water route and of course the Old Indian Trail (incorporated in the Crown Point Road in 1758) passed along the west bank of the Creek near Fort Mott, made a ford and rose up the hill past Fort Vengeance.

Through the winters most of the towns were able to rest from war as passage from Canada was too difficult. Travel by snowshoe or even upon the ice of Lake Champlain or Otter Creek was cumbersome at best. But with the arrival of spring the Indians, Tories and British came out of winter hibernation. In May of 1781, Jabez Olmstead of Pittsford saw Indians lurking about in the woods all day and he rather feared to go home that night. When he did he found his home destroyed. He went to the fort for help and a band of men quickly left in pursuit of the enemy. However, while they were off searching for the Indians, the Indians had either outwitted them or else a small group stayed behind, for the fort was attacked. There were only three men inside, the rest being the women of the town that had gone there for protection. They are said to have held off the siege successfully.<sup>93</sup>

It is possible that it was at this time<sup>94</sup> that Captain Benjamin Cooley was on duty at Fort Vengeance and that he received the note from Roger Stevens, Jr. In this note to Cooley, Stevens declared that he was in the vicinity at the head of a scouting party of Indians and Tories and wanted an interview with Cooley. He told the Captain to come to an appointed place at a certain time wearing his side arms and that he (Stevens) would be unarmed and would meet him as a friend.

91. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, p. 161.

92. Walton, E. P., *Governor and Council*, Vol. 2, p. 43.

93. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, p. 170.

94. The date given by Caverly is the year 1781—no day or month.

The interview was a long one and during it Stevens told Cooley that he supposed the townspeople did not think very highly of him for remaining a Loyalist, but that he felt it his duty. However, he claimed that he had done many unknown favors for his old Pittsford neighbors and that when the Indians had taken prisoners he had saved their lives, relieved them of any undue sufferings that they might have undergone, and often helped in their release. Even bragged that the Indians had once wanted to kill Cooley but that he had deterred them.<sup>95</sup>

Attacks, sorties, scouting parties, etc. continued into the summer, and in June a large force of Indians under the leadership of the Chief of the Caughnawagas, Tomo (also known as Thomas Orakrenton), planned to attack Fort Vengeance. The assault was set for night, but it was discovered in time. Captain Brookins lay in ambush with his men and the entire party of Indians was forced to retreat. In the course of the skirmish Chief Tomo was wounded in the leg.<sup>96</sup>

These series of attacks unsettled the colonists in the Otter Valley and a real feeling of fear and hesitancy can be read beneath the lines of the report found in the Assembly Journal for February 14, 1781: "The line of defense on the west side of the Green Mountains be established at the forts of Pittsford and Castleton, by no means to be drawn further to the south unless by urgent necessity by the opposition of a superior force of the Enemy &c. and that a committee be appointed on the west side of the mountains by this Assembly with full powers to remove the line from Castleton to the narrows of the Lake or elsewhere if it shall be found proper to act in conjunction with the troops from N. York if any such should arrive at the narrows &c."<sup>97</sup>

95. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, p. 175. It is interesting to note—in connection with Capt. Benjamin Cooley, his position throughout the war, and the location of his home in Pittsford—the following advertisement found in a newspaper in 1793: "There is a young woman in this town who says she was taken somewhere in the forepart of the last war, when and where she cannot tell, being a child when taken; it is conjectured by some, that it was from Brandon, in the state of Vermont, if that should be the case, and her friends have a mind to look her up, she may be found at Capt. Manning Bull's in Westfield between Granville and Fort Edwards . . . her name is supposed to be Cooley." (*The Farmer's Library or Vermont Political and Historical Register*. Rutland, Vol. 1, No. 1, April 1, 1793.)

96. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, p. 170.

97. Walton, E. P., *Governor and Council*, Vol. 2, p. 74. This same visiting committee for the Northern Frontier for the Board of War at Bennington suggested on June 23, 1781: ". . . That the fort to be built at Skenesborough (at the narrows) ought to be built on a small hill where one Wilson lives or North-

Spying, raiding and burning were carried on right up until the end of the Revolution. We are able to get a special insight of the method of one spy from the following quotation from a letter written by the Tory Roger Stevens, Jr., in a report to Captain Matthews (General Haldimand's secretary): "I have agreed with my brother Abel Stevens (a Loyal Man and entirely unsuspected among the Rebels) to bring intelligence in the following manner vizt,

"He being a great hunter and entirely in the confidence of the ruling men of the frontiers is to procure a general permission to hunt when and where he pleases. Mr. Curtice of Pittsford is to take the papers, intelligence &c. from Doctor Oldin and Mr. Merwin and give them to my brother who has engaged to bring them to New Haven Falls on Otter Creek, where I have engaged (by the Generals permission) to meet him on the 20th day of February (1782)."<sup>98</sup>

A sequel to this is described by Captain Justus Sherwood of the Loyal Rangers<sup>99</sup> in a letter to Captain Matthews. ". . . I sent Mr. Stevens with Wright to meet his brother at Pittsford with his reports from Rhode Island, Boston, &c. Mr. Stevens has gone with the Furrs to his Brother who is to proceed with them to Springfield, Hartford, Rhode Island, and Boston to enquire the numbers and situation of the French troops in Rhode Island in particular and in America in general, the state of Washington's army and the general plan for the ensuing campaign . . ."<sup>100</sup>

west about 5 or 6 hundred yards as Col. Walbridge shall direct, Taking into Consideration the conve'cy of Water." (Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County*, p. 526.)

98. *Ontario Historical Society Proceedings*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 16.

99. Capt. Sherwood led the Indian and Tory raid on Hubbardton July 6th and 7th, 1777.

100. *Op. cit.*