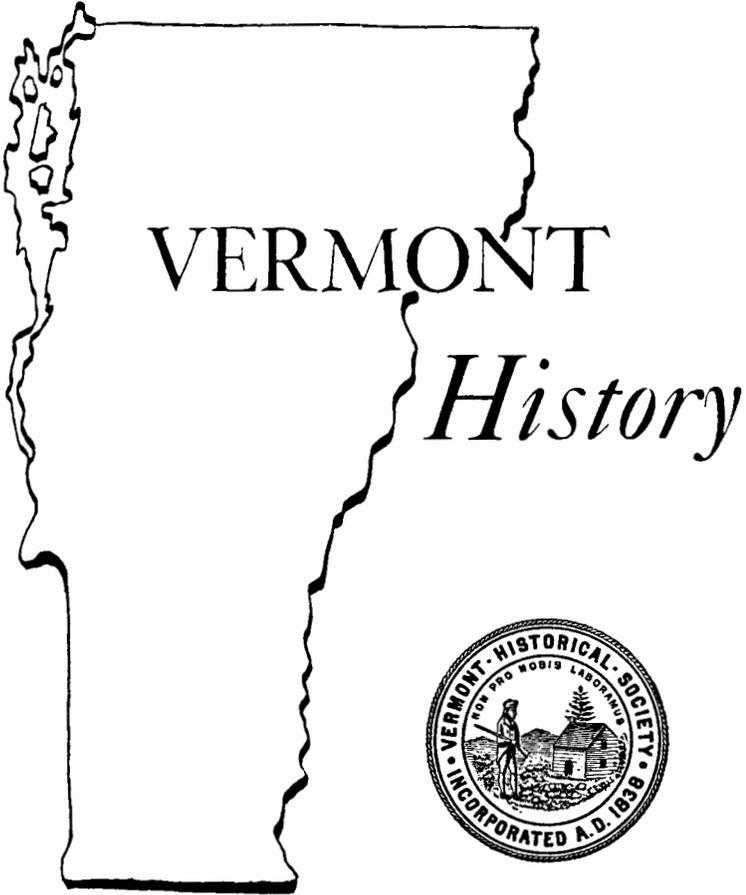


Summer 1976

VOL. 44 No. 3



The PROCEEDINGS of the
VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Bayley was an implacable opponent of the Haldimand Negotiations. The British decided to seize him and carry him to Canada.

The British Secret Service and the Attempt to Kidnap General Jacob Bayley of Newbury, Vermont, 1782

By J. ROBERT MAGUIRE

FREDERIC P. WELLS in his *History of Newbury* points out that despite the American victory at Yorktown in 1781, at no time during the Revolution did the patriot cause seem more hopeless for the people of the upper Connecticut River valley and their situation more dangerous than during the final two years of the war.¹ The year preceding Yorktown had witnessed the return after an absence of twenty-years of the most dreaded of all calamities when a British-led Indian war party descended upon Royalton, laid waste the town, killed some of the inhabitants and carried thirty-two others captive to Canada. Thus menaced on their ill-defended frontier, supporters of the American cause were confounded and disheartened by rumors of the intention of Vermont's leaders to restore the state to British rule; while the prospect of a reconciliation gave rise to a bolder surge of tory activity than at any other period in the conflict. Scouting parties came and went regularly through the woods from Canada, sheltered and provisioned by some of the leading men of the region: loyalists for whom the scouts furnished a means of maintaining an uninterrupted communication of intelligence to the British.

Throughout this difficult time the most unwavering defender of the American cause and the leader of the opposition to the conciliatory plans of

1. Frederic P. Wells, *History of Newbury, Vermont* (St. Johnsbury, Vt., 1902), pp. 96-97.

Gov. Thomas Chittenden and the Allen brothers was the region's most prominent figure, Gen. Jacob Bayley of Newbury. Bayley had gained considerable reputation for his military service during the French and Indian War, following which, in company with his fellow officer Timothy Bedel and two others, he obtained charters from the government of New Hampshire for the neighboring towns of Newbury and Haverhill, New Hampshire, located on opposite sides of the Connecticut River at the great meadows of the Lower Coos. After the royal proclamation of 1764 designating the west bank of the river as the boundary between New York and New Hampshire and the resulting dispute west of the Green Mountains over land titles, Bayley declined to join Ethan Allen in opposition to the claims of New York. Instead, acting on behalf of the proprietors of Newbury, in 1772 he obtained at his own expense a confirmatory charter for the town from New York, the government of which over the years appointed him to a number of important offices, including that of Brigadier General of Gloucester and Cumberland counties. The antagonism between Bayley and Allen, rooted in their adherence to opposing sides in the great jurisdictional controversy, was accompanied on Bayley's part by a personal aversion to Allen whose outspoken free-thinking in religious matters was repugnant to him.² This mutual antipathy was exacerbated on both sides by Allen's role in the Haldimand negotiations in the face of Bayley's implacable opposition to any accommodation with the British.

Regarded as Bayley was as a major obstacle to the success of the negotiations, it became one of the most cherished designs of the British secret service to seize him. The near successful attempt to do so by a party of Tories under Capt. Azariah Pritchard was undoubtedly the most famous incident of the Revolution in Newbury, "the only occasion during the war in which a hostile gun was fired or blood shed" in the town.³ The attack had consequences beyond the failure of its immediate objective for the loyalists, who scattered in confusion in the aftermath. Suspicions of betrayal and fruitless efforts by opposing factions among them to fix blame virtually ended their effectiveness as an organized force; while for the British the miscarriage of the plot caused a dissension within the secret service which proved irreparably damaging to morale. The majority of prominent Connecticut River loyalists who were exposed as active enemies of the American cause in the debacle survived the disgrace and in the years following the Revolution regained both influence and public office. Of all those involved in the plot, the most injured was Col. Thomas Johnson of

2. Edwin A. Bayley, "An Address on the Life and Public Services of Brig.-Gen. Jacob Bayley," *Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society, 1917-1918*, p. 71.

3. Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

Newbury, who in trying to serve both sides incurred the enmity of loyalists and patriots alike, from which he suffered a public obloquy which outlived his death thirty-seven years later.

Wells observes that the account of the episode given by Grant Powers in his *Historical Sketches of the Coos Country* is at variance in many particulars with contemporary written documents, a number of which Wells included in his history.⁴ These documents, however, represent the American side of the affair only; and Wells's own detailed account in turn differs in several respects from the British sources, which he apparently did not consult, although he does observe, in alluding to the divided loyalties of the time, that "the pride of many families would be wounded could they know what the Canadian archives can reveal."⁵

A key figure in the plot was Thomas Chamberlain of Topsham. He and his son, Jacob Bayley Chamberlain, the General's namesake, were the first persons to be arrested after the raid. Chamberlain was one of the original grantees of Newbury and the second settler in the town, where his son Jacob was the first born male child. He had been a justice of the peace under the crown and was "a man of very high standing in the community, in Newbury and afterward in Topsham," to which place he moved in 1780, where he cleared the first land.⁶ Chamberlain's arrest spread fear and consternation among the conspirators. Col. John Taplin of Corinth, a loyalist of considerable property and influence, on being informed that Chamberlain had disclosed everything he knew, fled in panic to Canada, where he reported to the British that Chamberlain had betrayed those involved in the plot.⁷ This was an injustice to Chamberlain. Although Wells says that he was "induced to tell what he knew" to the Committee of Safety, it will be seen from his deposition, which has recently come to light and is given below, that in his testimony, although damaging to Thomas Johnson and Timothy Bedel, he revealed little of his own involvement and nothing of that of Taplin and Col. Asa Porter of Haverhill, another prominent loyalist,

4. *Ibid.*, p. 99, referring to Grant Powers, *Historical Sketches of the Discovery, Settlement, and Progress of Events in the Coos Country and Vicinity* (Haverhill, N.H., 1841).

5. *Ibid.*, p. 120. Grateful acknowledgment is made of the assistance in the preparation of this article of the Historical Branch of the Public Archives of Canada in furnishing microfilm copies of the numerous relevant documents among the Haldimand Papers. Reference to this extensive record has been greatly facilitated by use of the calendar and transcripts prepared by the late Oscar E. Bredenberg of North Hero, Vermont, whose papers are deposited in the Bixby Memorial Library of Vergennes. The kind assistance of Mrs. Frederick Noonan, Librarian, in making this valuable collection available is likewise acknowledged with gratitude. In addition to the British sources, a number of important documents are to be found in "Col. Thomas Johnson's Letters and Documents, 1775-1807," *Proc. Vt. Hist. Soc.*, 1923-1925, pp. 87-140.

6. Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 499.

7. Public Archives of Canada, Haldimand Papers, B. 177-2, p. 410, John Taplin's information, July 31, 1782. Hereafter the Public Archives of Canada will be referred to as PAC and all references thereto are to the Haldimand Papers.

a graduate of Harvard and one of the largest landowners in the upper Connecticut valley.

British secret service operations were under the direction of Capt. Justus Sherwood, who in the autumn of 1780 had been entrusted by General Haldimand with the conduct of the delicate, and dangerous, negotiations for "the recovery of Vermont to the King's obedience," which Haldimand in pursuance of instructions from Lord George Germaine regarded as "the primary object of my concern."⁸ Sherwood, a one-time Green Mountain Boy, was twenty-eight at the outbreak of the Revolution, living on his farm in the New Hampshire Grant town of New Haven, where he was clerk for the proprietors. He possessed a remarkable character, conspicuous alike for his courage and his ability, which won for him the lasting respect and confidence of his British military superiors to a degree enjoyed by no other Vermont loyalist.⁹ He was unrelenting in his exertions in behalf of the royal cause and the successful outcome of his dealings with the Vermont leaders became for him, as for Haldimand, his main preoccupation for the remaining years of the war. "I freely confess," he wrote to Haldimand's secretary, Capt. Robert Mathews, "I have nothing so much at heart as reclaiming that people, many of whom were once very dear to me."¹⁰ In July 1781 Sherwood erected the Loyal Block House at Dutchman's Point on North Hero Island in Lake Champlain, and at this advanced post he established his headquarters, informing Mathews that "it is my humble opinion that there is not so proper a place on the frontiers as this for the residence and departure of secret scouts."¹¹

At this time Sherwood was joined in the service by Dr. George Smyth, a physician who had come from Ireland five years before the Revolution and settled at Fort Edward, N.Y., where he was living at the commencement of hostilities, and who as "Hudibras" had been the most valuable British agent in Albany until his recent discovery and arrest. Escaping from his captors, he had made his way to Canada where he had arrived in a state of exhaustion a few weeks previously. While recovering at St. Johns from the fatigue of his flight before reporting to Haldimand at Quebec ("the climbing of mountains and rocks, and travelling through swamps and thickets renders me incapable at present to pay my personal respects to your Excel-

8. *Ibid.*, B. 148, p. 32, Haldimand to Sir Henry Clinton, May 27, 1782.

9. General Burgoyne who in the bitterness of defeat had only harsh words of criticism for his loyalist auxiliaries was particular in excepting from his general censure "a few [who] were of distinguished bravery, among which it would be unjust not to particularize Mr. Fistar [Francis Phister of Hoosick, a veteran of the 60th regiment], who fell at Bennington, and Capt. Sharwood [sic], who was forward in every service of danger to the end of the campaign." Lieutenant-General [John] Burgoyne, *A State of the Expedition from Canada* (London, 1780), p. 102n.

10. PAC, B. 176, p. 78, Sherwood to Mathews, May 11, 1781.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 183, Sherwood to Mathews, July 29, 1781.

lency"¹²), Smyth conferred with Sherwood who, finding him to be possessed of merit and zeal for the service and sanguine in his hopes for reclaiming Vermont, informed Mathews that he thought Smyth would be very useful in assisting "to bring that people to their allegiance."¹³ Following an interview with Smyth, Haldimand agreed and sent the Doctor back to Sherwood to assist in the work of the secret service as coadjutor to the latter, the principal agent.¹⁴

Smyth established himself at St. Johns, where he acted as surgeon to the various loyalist corps garrisoned there.¹⁵ In command of the military district, the original limits of which from Chambly to Point au Fer had been extended to include the Loyal Block House, with headquarters at St. Johns, was Col. Barry St. Leger, who in 1777 had led the unsuccessful expeditionary force which was to have made a junction with Burgoyne at Albany by way of Oswego and the Mohawk River. Not surprisingly, this imperious senior officer found it difficult to accept Sherwood's independent role in the conduct of business the nature of which was not disclosed to him and the progress of which was communicated over his head to the Commander-in-Chief. In pursuance of his own standing orders to keep out "such scouts as your judgment and the intelligence you receive may dictate and require,"¹⁶ St. Leger was insistent that all scouts departing for the colonies do so subject to his orders. The difficulty thus created gave rise to a continuing source of strain between the secret service and the regular army establishment, calling for considerable discretion and tact on Sherwood's part to avoid a disruptive challenge to St. Leger's authority. Haldimand apparently sensed the potential for discord in introducing the contentious Smyth, with his self-acknowledged "choleric disposition of temper," into this delicate relationship, reminding St. Leger of his "great dependence on the united endeavours of Dr. Smyth and Captain Sherwood," and requesting him to "improve every occasion to preserve between them a perfect harmony and good understanding" and to "watch over and prevent any early impression which a jealousy, too common to human nature, might occasion."¹⁷

12. *Ibid.*, p. 131, Smyth to Haldimand, June 15, 1781.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 138, Sherwood to Mathews, June 25, 1781.

14. *Ibid.*, B. 179, p. 63, Mathews to Sherwood, July 19, 1781.

15. In November 1781, the remnants of several loyalist units which had served under Burgoyne were embodied in a new regiment under the command of Maj. Edward Jessup, known as the Loyal Rangers or Jessup's Rangers, in which corps both Sherwood and Smyth were mustered from the time of its formation until the end of the war. E. Rae Stuart, *Jessup's Rangers as a Factor in Loyalist Settlement* (The Ontario Department of Public Records and Archives, 1961), p. 45.

16. PAC, B. 135, p. 164, Mathews to St. Leger, Nov. 23, 1780.

17. *Ibid.*, B. 176, p. 159, Smyth to Mathews, July 17, 1781; B. 135, p. 237, Mathews to St. Leger, July 16, 1781.

From the outset Smyth displayed an impatience with his subordinate position as coadjutor and an inclination to act independently of Sherwood. At his meeting with Haldimand, he had proposed, perhaps not without an understandable desire for revenge, that parties be sent out to kidnap a number of individuals, "the most obnoxious to the friends of Government, in the neighbourhood of Albany." Haldimand was immediately receptive and instructed Sherwood that he wished the plan "to be carried into execution with all possible dispatch."¹⁸ By mid-July Sherwood and Smyth had seven parties in readiness at St. Johns, hindered in their departure, however, by St. Leger's insistence that the dispatching of each scout be subject to his direction; to which Sherwood ventured the suggestion to Mathews that the Colonel might be directed to give him a general order covering the departure of scouts.¹⁹ In order to safeguard the secrecy of the operation, Sherwood conducted the parties (a "race of heroes," in Smyth's description²⁰) to Dutchman's Point, on the pretense that they were there to assist in the work on the Loyal Blockhouse, whence they were dispatched on their several missions.

Ten days later, Smyth joined Sherwood at the advanced post, where the latter was expecting at any hour the arrival of the Vermont commissioners, and gave him the alarming news that he, the Doctor, acting on his own after Sherwood's departure from St. Johns, had ordered out a party under the command of Capt. Azariah Pritchard to seize General Bayley; and the scout was being dispatched by St. Leger. Although the idea of kidnapping Bayley was an old one to Sherwood, he himself having proposed it a year earlier to General Powell, then commanding at St. Johns, he considered that "the taking of him while the Flag was here would be a breach of faith and contrary to the General's instructions."²¹ Smyth confessed that he "didn't conceive at this time that Bayley belonged to Vermont," and,

18. *Ibid.*, B. 179, p. 57, Mathews to Sherwood, July 4, 1781.

19. *Ibid.*, B. 176, p. 155, Sherwood to Mathews, July 14, 1781.

The Swiss-born Haldimand displayed an uncharacteristic diffidence in dealing with St. Leger, unwilling apparently to provoke a confrontation with such a senior British officer. Haldimand's commission to Sherwood ("having thought fit to entrust to your management and direction the fitting out and dispatching of scouts upon secret service") was limited in its authority to "all loyalists and others employed in that duty . . . to obey and follow such instructions . . . as you shall find necessary to give them." *Ibid.*, B. 179, p. 52, Haldimand to Sherwood, June 18, 1781. In response to the latest difficulty over the dispatching of scouts, Haldimand avoided the issue and tactfully wrote to St. Leger of his esteem for the two secret agents: "they having my positive commands not to disclose to any persons whatsoever the business they are entrusted in, you will attribute this caution to a restriction which the good of the service has obliged me to comply with, and not to a want of that perfect confidence which [considering] your rank and character as well as my inclinations, you really possess." *Ibid.*, B. 135, p. 248, Haldimand to St. Leger, July 26, 1781. Eventually, several months later, the situation was improved somewhat when Haldimand admitted St. Leger into the secret of the true character of the Vermont negotiations.

20. *Ibid.*, B. 176, p. 159, Smyth to Mathews, July 17, 1781.

21. *Ibid.*, B. 182, p. 247, Sherwood to Powell, Aug. 24, 1780; B. 176, p. 179, Sherwood to Mathews, Aug. 3, 1781.

acknowledging that "there was an error in my conduct," he wrote immediately to St. Leger requesting that his orders to Pritchard be countermanded and hurried off to St. Johns to try to prevent the departure of the scout. The Colonel's response was predictable; he "insisted that Pritchard should go immediately and apprehend Bayley and secure his papers." On Smyth's informing him that he could not consent to this "for reasons secret to myself," St. Leger "made answer, he would take it upon himself, and would at all events have Bayley taken and then gave his order & instructions to Pritchard, who immediately obeyed."²² A short time later Pritchard appeared at the Loyal Block House with eight men, en route to his destination. Although, as Sherwood pointedly reported to Mathews, "his instructions were sealed, not to be opened till he left the Lake," Pritchard "informed me that he had orders to take Gen. Bayley and bring him in, but if he was not able to walk to kill him and bring his papers." Rather than order Pritchard back ("I dare not nor did I wish to act thus openly against the Colonel's orders"), Sherwood persuaded Pritchard to give up the attempt on Bayley but permitted him to continue on his scout to the Connecticut River settlements for intelligence. Sherwood concluded his report by observing that he was satisfied that "Col. St. Leger will never know enough of this affair to be dissatisfied with it."²³

None of the scouts returned with its intended kidnap victim, owing largely to the alarm's having been spread in advance by a deserter from the party led by Lt. Israel Ferguson of the King's Rangers. Despite the forewarning and the precautionary measures taken, however, Gen. Philip Schuyler narrowly escaped capture by the party of which he was the object under the resolute Capt. John Walter Myers, of Ebenezer Jessup's Corps of King's Loyal Americans, who forcibly entered Schuyler's house and exchanged gunfire with the latter and six armed men stationed there for his protection. One of the guards was wounded in the melee and two others were carried off as prisoners, along with some of Schuyler's plate, the return of which, by order of Haldimand, created for the secret service a humiliating sequel to the failure of the mission. Another of the parties which did not return entirely empty handed was that led by the notorious Joseph Bettys of the King's Rangers, an ungovernable desperado whose victim was to have been Dr. Samuel Stringer of Albany but who seized and brought back instead "the daughter of one LaGrange," whom he refused under orders to give up, as a consequence of which he was placed under arrest.²⁴ Smyth described the resulting dilemma to Mathews: "should this

22. *Ibid.*, p. 196, Smyth to Mathews, Aug. 3, 1781.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 179, Sherwood to Mathews, Aug. 3, 1781.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 247, Smyth to Mathews, Aug. 25, 1781.

Dame be sent back, I think he would not be long after her which would ruin many of His Majesty's loyal subjects."²⁵ Bettys, according to Sabine, was "a shrewd, intelligent, daring and bad man," to whom "pity and mercy were emotions which he never felt"; his career "was marked by almost every enormity that can disgrace a human being. His very name struck terror, and a record of his enterprises and crimes would fill a book. He burned the dwellings of persons whom he hated, or took them off by murder. Fatigue, distance, or danger, were no obstacle in the accomplishment of his designs. He knew that he carried his life in his hand. He scorned disguise or concealment. He fell upon his victims at noon as well as at midnight."²⁶

Sabin's description of Bettys could, in part at least, serve as well for Azariah Pritchard in that the latter like Bettys was a shrewd, intelligent and daring man. A native of Derby, Connecticut, he fled to Canada in 1777 when a sloop he owned was seized while on its way to New York with provisions for the British fleet under an agreement with Lord Howe.²⁷ While passing through Vermont at the time en route from Orford, N.H., his movements were observed by the watchful General Bayley who reported from Newbury that "Pritchard's business is into Canada to get a commission for a privateer now fitting out at Portsmouth, under pretense of going in our service; other things very criminal Pritchard is guilty of."²⁸ For the next three years he "acted as guide on the eastern part of Lake Champlain" and engaged in secret service work, which he claimed to have conducted at his own expense.²⁹ In September 1780 he was mustered as a captain in the first battalion of the King's Rangers, commanded by Maj. James Rogers, and thereafter "continued to be employed in secret service during the rest of the war."³⁰ He appears to have been constantly active and well suited to the rigors of the service, in which he was unsurpassed for boldness and energy. An amiable and engaging personality is evident in the account of him given by Jonathan Elkins, whom Pritchard carried prisoner to

25. *Ibid.*, p. 270, Smyth to Mathews, Sept. 4, 1781.

26. Lorenzo Sabine, *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1864), I, p. 228. Bettys had served under Benedict Arnold at Valcour as mate of the *Philadelphia* and in the course of the battle had performed such "feats of extraordinary valor" that Washington had been induced to pardon him when he was arrested later as a spy and condemned to death at West Point. *Ibid.*; Alexander Garden, *Anecdotes of the American Revolution*, Second Series (Charleston, S.C., 1828), pp. 167-170; MS. pay roll of the gondola *Philadelphia*, Aug. 1-Oct. 16, 1776 (Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.).

27. *Second Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario* (Toronto, 1905), pp. 349-350.

28. *State Papers of New Hampshire*, ed., Nathaniel Bouton, VIII (Concord, N.H., 1874), p. 726, Bayley to Col. Israel Morey, Nov. 5, 1777. Describing himself at this time as "a sort of Watchman on this part of the American walls," Bayley considered that he would be "very guilty if I do not give notice when I apprehend danger." Bayley to the Convention of the Representatives of the State of New York, April 22, 1777. *Papers of the Continental Congress*, vol. 207, p. 543. Library of Congress.

29. *Second Report Ontario Bureau of Archives*, p. 349; PAC, B. 161, p. 148, Pritchard to Mathews, Oct. 4, 1780.

30. *Second Report Ontario Bureau of Archives*, p. 350.

Canada along with Col. Thomas Johnson in March 1781, when "the snow was four feet deep." Elkins describes him as being "of a free open conversation," and as receiving Johnson's abusive remarks to him while on the difficult march "with great pleasantness."³¹ Johnson himself later acknowledged to Pritchard that "what adds much to your honour is that all the prisoners who have fallen into your hands give you the credit of treating them with the humanity and generosity that your situation would admit of."³² He was notably successful in enlisting prisoners into the service and in winning the personal loyalty of a small coterie associated with him in his various enterprises (one such being characterized by Sherwood, after identifying him at a court of inquiry, as "a person who generally goes with Capt. Pritchard and serves as kind of a cadet with him").³³ His garrulous nature, however, caused him to be mistrusted by Sherwood, for his "volubility" and made him the subject of complaint on more than one occasion by Smyth, for his "blabbing."³⁴ His effectiveness in the service was further compromised by a self-serving opportunism which led to his involvement in a series of picaresque exploits the criminal nature of which (fraudulent recruiting, passing counterfeit money, trafficking with the enemy, dealing in contraband, profiteering, smuggling), while not as deadly as the misdeeds of the terrible Joe Bettys, nonetheless eventually exasperated his superiors and, at the request of Chittenden and Allen, disqualified him from further service in Vermont.³⁵ A year before Pritchard received his commission in the King's Rangers he was the subject of a report by Sherwood and the loyalist Capt. Daniel McAlpin to General Powell for unlawfully enlisting men from the engineer department after the recruiting parties had got them drunk and under the threat that unless they were sworn before a justice of the peace they could not be considered soldiers.³⁶ It may be

31. "Reminiscences of Jonathan Elkins," *Proc. Vt. Hist. Soc.*, 1919-1920, p. 194.

32. "Col. Thomas Johnson's Letters and Documents, 1775-1807," *Proc. Vt. Hist. Soc.*, 1923-1925, p. 129.

33. PAC, B. 132, p. 164, Proceedings of a court of inquiry, Dec. 14, 1782.

34. *Ibid.*, B. 177-1, p. 295, Sherwood to Mathews, May 18, 1782; B. 176, p. 328, Smyth to Mathews, Nov. 3, 1781. Sherwood found similar fault with Caleb Green, an otherwise excellent agent, "who notwithstanding his cleverness in the woods, has I fear a little too much volubility." *Ibid.*, B. 177-1, p. 295, Sherwood to Mathews, May 18, 1782. Smyth, complaining of a third agent, John Platt (whose tongue, according to St. Leger, was "too loosely hung"), referred to him as "the very counterpart of Pritchard, voluble in expression, and a mere busy body in what does not concern him." *Ibid.*, B. 134, p. 55, St. Leger to Mathews, June 22, 1781; B. 177-2, p. 697, Smyth to Mathews, Dec. 28, 1782.

35. *Ibid.*, B. 178, p. 15, Ensign Thomas Smyth to Mathews, Jan. 8, 1783.

36. *Ibid.*, B. 161, p. 33, McAlpin to Powell, Dec. 26, 1779. A year later Pritchard was still trying to bring his company up to full strength. *Ibid.*, p. 148, Pritchard to Mathews, Oct. 4, 1780. Recruiting for the King's Rangers was complicated by the fact that because Col. Robert Rogers' commission to raise the corps came from Sir Henry Clinton in New York, only men enlisted in the colonies were to be accepted; enlisting in Canada was prohibited. *Ibid.*, B. 160, p. 22, Mathews to Maj. James Rogers, Dec. 13, 1779. The resulting disputes over recruiting with the other loyalist corps were a constant source of difficulty which persisted until the end of the war.

revealing of Sherwood's estimate of Pritchard that, despite the latter's years of service as "guide on the eastern part of Lake Champlain," in writing to Mathews, at the time the several kidnap parties were being sent out, of the "great want of good guides for Connecticut River scouts," he requested the services of Adonijah Gillet and Solomon Ball, then on duty at Carleton Island, whom Sherwood described as "the best guides for the eastward that I know of in the Army."³⁷

Pritchard was accompanied on his intelligence scout to the Connecticut River settlements by Benjamin Patterson of Piermont, N.H., who had recently arrived in Canada and who was the son of John Patterson, a prominent justice of the peace for Grafton County, N.H. Through the mediation of Patterson, Pritchard had an interview with Col. Timothy Bedel of Haverhill, one of the best known and most influential figures in the upper Connecticut valley.³⁸ Pritchard reported that Bedel engaged upon his honor to use his influence to return the state to its allegiance, and if this should fail through negotiation, to bring away as many men as he could to join the army in Canada, and to assist in taking Bayley whenever Haldimand should order it. He agreed that "when he sends any written intelligence, he will direct it to Captain Sherwood and sign himself John Mountine without a cross on the tee. Colonel Porter [Asa Porter of Haverhill] will sign himself John Mountine with a cross on the tee."³⁹ Sherwood was delighted with the results of the expedition. "Porter has always been firmly loyal," he wrote Mathews, "he is very penetrating and bold; Bedel is one of the most subtle, cunning geniuses in that part of the country; . . . Vermont have still greatest confidence in him." He considered the two to be "the best sources for intelligence that we can find in the country."⁴⁰ Smyth regarded Patterson as "the only machinist to operate with Messrs. Bedel and Porter."⁴¹

A third source, from whom a great deal was expected, was Col. Thomas Johnson of Newbury, who had commanded the unsuccessful American at-

37. *Ibid.*, 176, p. 183, Sherwood to Mathews, July 29, 1781.

38. Timothy Bedel was one of the original grantees of both Newbury and Haverhill and settled in the latter town. In August 1775, being recommended to General Schuyler by the New Hampshire Committee of Safety as "a person of great experience in war, and well acquainted with Canada," he commanded the first New Hampshire regiment in the Northern Army in the invasion of Canada. The following year he was court-martialed by order of Congress for the surrender of the Cedars under his subordinate, Major Butterfield, during the American retreat. In 1779 he was ordered by Washington to appear before a court of inquiry concerning charges of misconduct in the quartermaster's and commissary's departments at Haverhill. Peter Force, *American Archives*, Fourth Series, III, 60. George F. Morris, *Address before the New Hampshire Historical Society, June 10, 1903* (Lisbon, N.H., n.d.), p. 15. He is described by Frye Bayley, the General's nephew, as "a bold soldier but dissolute character." "Reminiscences of Col. Frye Bayley," *Proc. Vt. Hist. Soc., 1923-1925*, p. 55.

39. PAC, B. 176, p. 228, Pritchard's report, Aug. 18, 1781.

40. *Ibid.*, B. 180, p. 120, Sherwood to Mathews, Aug. 19, 1781.

41. *Ibid.*, B. 176, p. 253, Smyth to Mathews, Aug. 26, 1781.

tack on Mount Independence in September 1777. After being taken prisoner the previous March by Pritchard in Peacham and brought to Canada, he succeeded over a period of several months in convincing his captors of his loyalty to the crown. In October he was released on parole and permitted to return to Newbury on the understanding that he would furnish intelligence, provision scouts and report promptly to any place to which the British might summon him.⁴² As a means of maintaining contact with Johnson, a short time after his release Pritchard carried off Levi Sylvester of Newbury to Canada and persuaded him to act as go-between with Johnson. Since Sylvester was often in the woods hunting, as he was when taken by Pritchard, he seemed a suitable person for the job, as his periodic absences to meet with the British scouts were not likely to arouse undue suspicion. Sylvester was allowed to escape and returned to Newbury where he entered upon his new role with enthusiasm and, according to Wells, "gave the [American] authorities considerable trouble."⁴³

In early March 1782 Pritchard and Patterson met with Sylvester at a rendezvous on Onion River, "about 20 miles from Newbury & 90 from St. Johns," at which time the latter relayed some remarkable intelligence for General Haldimand from Colonel Bedel. On Washington's recommendation, Congress had offered Bedel command of a brigade to take part in a planned spring invasion of Canada. Bedel had accepted and proposed Col. William Simpson, a staunch loyalist, as his second in command, and would endeavor to enlist as many tories as possible. Bedel offered to give Haldimand timely notice of the invasion and of a suitable time and place for surrendering the brigade, which was to act as an advanced corps by way of Hazen's road. In return, Bedel asked for permanent rank as colonel and command of a battalion. In order to receive Haldimand's reply, Bedel directed that Pritchard and Patterson meet with him and Colonel Simpson at Topsham on May 20, "and to make this agreement more satisfactory to the General, Col. Bedel wishes him to send a third person with them."⁴⁴ This scheme matured under the direction of Smyth, who advised Mathews of Patterson's recommendation that the third person requested by Bedel should be an officer of distinction.⁴⁵ Amid a flurry of reports and rumors of an impending French-American invasion, Haldimand, although the plan struck him as being "at least, very Romantick, if not containing at the bottom something worse," was sufficiently interested to name Maj. James Rogers for this service, directing him to "confer with Captain Sherwood

42. Wells, *op cit.*, p. 97.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 705.

44. PAC, B. 178, p. 393, Pritchard's information concerning Bedel, n.d.

45. *Ibid.*, B. 177-1, p. 172, Smyth to Mathews, April 3, 1782.

and Dr. Smyth upon this subject, as something material may strike you upon communing together."⁴⁶

Sherwood was immediately skeptical, and on the first of May dispatched a message to Col. Asa Porter requesting his opinion of the plan.⁴⁷ Bearer of this communication, to whom Sherwood confided details of the proposal, which were considered "of too delicate a nature to be committed to writing," was Joseph White, one of the original grantees and an early settler of Newbury for whom Sherwood had a high regard. He had arrived in Canada the previous July at which time he had furnished information against Benjamin Patterson, to the effect that the latter had come in not because of his loyalty but because he was in flight from the consequences of some fraudulent business dealings, a report which apparently was the basis of Sherwood's mistrust of Patterson.⁴⁸ The enmity between White and Patterson was eventually to produce results which Pritchard came to regard as the cause of the miscarriage of his attempt on Bayley. In the meantime, however, secret service operations had reached their high point of activity. "When Maj. Rogers is off," Sherwood reported on May 2, 1782, "we shall have no less than 47 men in different parts of the rebel frontier on secret service."⁴⁹

Following White's departure from the Loyal Block House with the message for Porter, Patterson, who was to accompany Major Rogers' party, questioned a number of Sherwood's men at the post as to White's destination and, receiving no satisfaction, questioned Sherwood himself, who "informed him that White was a hunting. He then asked me in a pressing manner and with great emotion if White was not gone to Connecticut

46. *Ibid.*, B. 160, p. 166, Haldimand to Rogers, April 28, 1782. Haldimand cautioned Rogers against recruiting while on business of such a serious nature: "You are hereby positively required to make the business you are sent on the sole object of your attention, relinquishing every idea of recruiting, or any other that might divert it." *Ibid.* Rogers was well known to Bedel, whom he considered "one of my best friends." Rogers to Bedel, Feb. 16, 1782, *The Papers of George Washington*, vol. 191, Library of Congress. James Rogers was a younger brother of the famous ranger Robert Rogers. Wells (*op. cit.*, p. 98) is incorrect in stating that it was Robert Rogers who "came into Coos with a strong force" on this occasion. The latter as a result of his profligacy and intemperance had by this time been disgraced in the eyes of the authorities and become a source of painful embarrassment to his brother. PAC, B. 160, pp. 47; 49, Maj. James Rogers to Mathews, April 29, May 1, 1780. There is no evidence of Robert Rogers' presence in Canada following his release from imprisonment in Philadelphia, which occurred in late 1781 or early 1782.

47. *Ibid.*, B. 177-1, p. 252, Sherwood to Porter, May 1, 1782.

48. *Ibid.*, B. 176, p. 154, Joseph White's information, July 14, 1781.

49. *Ibid.*, B. 177-1, p. 254, Sherwood to Mathews, May 2, 1782. Unknown to Sherwood when he wrote this, the number of men out on secret service had been reduced two days before when Joseph Bettys and John Parker were hanged in Albany. Remarking on their deaths to Mathews several days later, Sherwood observed that "poor Bettys and Parker, who were both hanged on a gallows the last day of April . . . died like soldiers engaged in a just cause." *Ibid.*, p. 295, May 18, 1782. Smyth reported of Bettys' widow that "the woman is certainly in distress and her husband died so much in debt here that she cannot support herself. — She will soon bring forth something that will remind her of the sire." *Ibid.*, p. 346, Smyth to Mathews, June 12, 1782.

River, which obliged me to tell him an untruth by declaring he was not gone on secret service, but was really a hunting moose.’⁵⁰ White and his guide, Cornelius Miller of Sherwood’s company of Jessup’s Rangers, were delayed on their journey by two days of bad weather, as a consequence of which they were overtaken by Patterson and two others who fired upon them as they came in sight. In alarm, White threw away the letter for Porter and was unable to find it again. “The first that Mr. Patterson spoke to Mr. White was as follows: ‘you are going to Coos, and I am sent by Capt. Sherwood to order you to turn back immediately.’” White refused, at which Patterson threatened to take Miller back at any rate to be tried by court martial as a suspected person. When questioned as to his destination, White replied “he was going on his own business but did not know where. Patterson replied he knew, he was going to Squire Chamberlain, and likewise knew his business, but he need not proceed, for Maj. Rogers’ plan of business was publicly known all over Coos, and the whole would come to nothing. Mr. White replied he knew nothing of Maj. Rogers’ business, or of his being out, but he would proceed on his own. Patterson then began in a wild confused manner to tell before the whole party that he had seen Mr. Stevens’ [Roger Stevens, Jr., one of Sherwood’s agents] correspondents in the woods and that Maj. Rogers’ whole plan of business was defeated, for it was made public in Coos, and the woods was full of scouts.” After an “abundance of such wild kind of talk, which was accompanied with all the looks and gestures of a mad man,” Patterson permitted White and his guide to continue on their way, after directing White “to proceed a due east course, which if he had done, Patterson well knew would have carried him at least 25 or 30 miles out of his way, and thereby hindered him at least four days.”⁵¹

White arrived in Corinth on May 8 and made his presence known to Col. Taplin. The following morning Thomas Chamberlain came to see him, to whom White gave a full report of his business there and how he came to lose the letter for Porter. On Chamberlain’s advice, this was communicated as well to Taplin. “They were both much surprised and alarmed at what he informed them respecting Col. Bedel & declared that they had never heard a syllable of the matter before & firmly believed it was a plan to take Rogers, or to detect the friends to government, and that Gen. Bayley was at the bottom of it & had, in conjunction with Bedel, sent Patterson to Canada as a tool to bring about their secret plots against government and its friends.” That evening Chamberlain went to Col. Porter and informed him

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 313-314, Sherwood to Mathews, May 23, 1782.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 310-313, White’s report, May 23, 1782.

of White's disclosure "which so much shocked him that he would not stay at home, but took his horse and set off down the country immediately, after sending the following message to Mr. White, viz., that he had never heard a hint of Bedel's plan before; that it was impossible for Bedel to do anything which Patterson had reported to the General; that neither Bedel nor Patterson were to be trusted as they were both totally void of principle; that he, Porter, wished to see Mr. White, and to write on the subject, but dare not, for he was persuaded that all his motions would be closely watched."⁵²

When Major Rogers appeared for the scheduled rendezvous with Bedel, White reported, "Bedel did not make any attempt to meet the Major himself, nor did he send to notify anyone of those gentlemen who Patterson reported were privy to the plan, although there was not the least alarm in the country nor the least suspicion amongst friends or foes of Maj. Rogers' coming, for the country never was in a more perfect state of tranquility, not so much as one reconnoitering party being out, nor had there been a scout sent out for a month past or more."⁵³ Forwarding White's report to Mathews, Sherwood wrote that "I believe every syllable of Mr. White's report may be relied on for truth. — I have enclosed a small note from Col. Taplin, and another from Mr. Chamberlain, wrote & spelt in a bad manner to prevent discovery if taken. Col. Porter did not receive my letter, but if he had received it, Mr. White thinks, he was too much frightened to have wrote an answer, for he really thinks the whole plan originated in Bayley, and is leveled at him."⁵⁴

Rogers' return to the Loyal Block House was reported by Sherwood on May 18: "10 o'clock: Maj. Rogers has this moment returned and the whole business miscarried, through the volubility I suppose of Capt. Pritchard . . . or . . . Col. Johnson has been let into the secret by Sylvester and has discovered the whole to Bayley."⁵⁵

It is clear that Sherwood recognized the need for establishing a line of communication other than through Sylvester, Patterson and Pritchard, with more reliable intelligence sources than Bedel and Johnson. White had concluded his report by saying that "Messrs Porter, Taplin & Chamberlain will closely watch Bayley and Bedel for a few days, after which Squire Chamberlain will bring the particulars of all they can gather to the mouth of river Lamoille by the 1st of June, at which time and place he wishes to see

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 314-315.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 316.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 308, Sherwood to Mathews, May 23, 1782. Sherwood found that White's report "places Patterson's and Bedel's conduct in a very suspicious light to my view, or, if they intend nothing worse, it appears to me a Jockeying plan." *Ibid.*

55. *Ibid.*, p. 295, Sherwood to Mathews, May 18, 1782.

Capt. Sherwood and me.”⁵⁶ Sherwood regarded Thomas Chamberlain as “a very sensible, steady man.” He advised Mathews that “if I don’t hear from you before the 1st of June [I] shall go to meet him at river Lamoille . . . I shall at the same time endeavour to establish a future correspond[ence] with him and Col. Taplin in such a manner that all papers and intelligence of importance may be sent to [the] same place on the river Lamoille where Mr. White can receive them at a time appointed.”⁵⁷

White reported that while on his mission “he could have taken Bayley, but those gentlemen with whom he corresponded would not consent to it at present.”⁵⁸ The plan had been only temporarily put aside the preceding year when Sherwood dissuaded Pritchard from making the attempt. Sherwood advised Mathews at that time that “it is very probable Bayley may be taken twenty days hence (if requisite) much easier than at this time.”⁵⁹ A few months later Pritchard again expressed a wish for the assignment; and Sherwood notified Mathews on October 11 that “Mr. Pritchard will be sent off from Dutchman’s Point . . . and we shall give him orders to spare no pains to lay hold of Bayley.” Preparations were abandoned, however, when it was reported that Bayley had gone to Congress.⁶⁰

When the plan was revived, following the return of Major Rogers and receipt of the intelligence brought in by White, there appears to have been no question that the long deferred Pritchard would have command of the kidnap party. On June 4 he received orders “to proceed to Newbury to take Gen. Bayley”; Pritchard swore “he’ll have him, if to be found.”⁶¹ He was, however, “disappointed of taking Mr. Patterson” with him, by order of Sherwood, who designated White in his place, informing Pritchard, according to the latter, “that White had laid a plan that would not fail and begged me to pursue.”⁶² In the meantime, Sherwood was worried because he had heard nothing from Chamberlain and the time scheduled for their June 1 rendezvous had passed. “I expected ere this,” he wrote to

56. *Ibid.*, p. 317, White’s report, May 23, 1782.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 308, Sherwood to Mathews, May 23, 1782. The likely place of rendezvous was “Brown’s Farm, Dead Creek, near the River Lamoille,” used by Pritchard as well on occasion. *Ibid.*, B. 178, pp. 393 ff. Unsigned report endorsed “Capt. Pritchard’s private information concerning Col. Bedel,” n.d. Brown was undoubtedly Charles Brown, one of Pritchard’s “most active men.” *Ibid.*, B. 177-1, p. 106, Pritchard’s information, March 6, 1782.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 308, Sherwood to Mathews, May 23, 1782. According to Sherwood, White was “an implacable enemy to Genl. Bayley and has often solicited me to procure him leave to go and bring Bayley in prisoner.” *Ibid.*, p. 101, Sherwood to Mathews, March 5, 1782.

59. *Ibid.*, B. 176, p. 179, Sherwood to Mathews, Aug. 3, 1781.

60. *Ibid.*, B. 132, p. 153, Maj. Dundas to Mathews, Sept. 20, 1781; B. 176, pp. 307; 311, Sherwood to Mathews, Oct. 10, 1781; Smyth to Mathews, Oct. 11, 1781.

61. *Ibid.*, B. 177-2, p. 367, Pritchard to Mathews, June 21, 1782; B. 177-1, p. 329, Smyth to Mathews, June 1, 1782.

62. *Ibid.*, B. 177-2, p. 367, Pritchard to Mathews, June 21, 1782.

Mathews, "to be able to send you something interesting from Mr. Chamberlain, but he has never made his appearance and I fear he is in trouble. I have, however, sent the enclosed (directed to Tanner and Charly) by Capt. White to Col. Taplin & Mr. Chamberlain, which Pritchard is ignorant of."⁶³ Pritchard was similarly ignorant of secret instructions to Capt. James Breakenridge of the King's Rangers, who accompanied the scout as a volunteer, to whom Smyth "slyly gave . . . a hint to watch the motions of the party that on their return no false representations be handed us."⁶⁴ The rest of the party consisted of Cpl. Abner Barlow and John and Henry Cross, all of Pritchard's company of King's Rangers, and one or possibly two others whose names are not known. Upon arrival in Newbury the party was joined by Levi Sylvester and White's nineteen year-old son, Joseph White, Jr.⁶⁵

Conducted by White, the party arrived on Friday, June 14, "within a little distance of Colonel Taplin's" in Corinth, where it was learned from Taplin that Bayley was at home. From there, guided "through the inhabitants" by Taplin's son, the party proceeded to within "about a hundred rods" of White's house in Newbury, where they were joined by the younger White and where they camped for the night.⁶⁶ Meanwhile Taplin went to inform Thomas Johnson, according to the latter, "that there was a party in from Canada and that some of my neighbors would be taken off soon. My answer was that they must take care of themselves; it concerned me but little."⁶⁷ In the evening Sylvester, having been alerted by the younger White, was sent by Pritchard to spy out Bayley's movements.

Sylvester and Johnson were ill-suited to one another by temperament for their partnership in spying. Following his release from captivity, Johnson had made a full disclosure to Washington of his compact with the British, including the terms of his parole; and the strain of the double role he thereafter played apparently affected his health. According to Bayley's son James, referring to the time of the attempt on his father, "it was well known that Johnson was then unwell and seldom went abroad."⁶⁸ Sus-

63. *Ibid.*, B. 177-1, p. 274, Sherwood to Mathews, June 9, 1782.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 346, Smyth to Mathews, June 12, 1782. Breakenridge had been arrested a few days prior to the departure of the scout by order of Col. St. Leger for having gone into Vermont, on leave obtained from Sherwood and Smyth, without his permission. *Ibid.*, B. 134, p. 227, Maj. Campbell to Brig. Speth, May 29, 1782. He appears to have joined Pritchard's party as a volunteer as a way out of this difficulty.

65. Although Wells includes in his *History of Newbury* a letter from Moses Dow of Haverhill to Meshech Wear written the day after the raid in which Dow states that Pritchard's party consisted of "eight or ten," Wells followed the account given by Powers in his *Historical Sketches of the Coos Country* in stating that the attack was made by eighteen men. Wells, *op. cit.*, pp. 99; 401. Powers, *op. cit.*, p. 217. Pritchard in his official report says that he had nine men in his party. PAC, B. 177-2, p. 367, Pritchard to Mathews, June 21, 1782.

66. *Ibid.*, B. 182, p. 547, White's report to Smyth, June 30, 1782.

67. "Memorandum in Johnson's hand of some incidents previous to and of the interview with Capt. Azariah Pritchard on June 15, 1782," *Proc. Vt. Hist. Soc., 1923-1925*, p. 110.

68. PAC, B. 177-2, p. 388, Smyth to Mathews, June 17, 1782.

pected by his neighbors, he bore their hostility with resignation, and suggested that Sylvester do likewise, cautioning him to "bear all that was said against us and show no offense as . . . that was the best way we could get along." Sylvester, however, was not disposed to suffer meekly what he considered the offense of being called a tory; he "damned them and God damned them and said that [he] would send them to hell for [he] would hear no such talk from them."⁶⁹ Evidentially viewing his forced association with Sylvester as an added affliction in his unfortunate situation, Johnson eventually challenged and denounced him before the Newbury Committee of Safety at the war's end when Sylvester sought to make peace and return to the town.⁷⁰

Early on Saturday morning, June 15, Sylvester went to Johnson's house to summon him to a meeting with Pritchard. He found him still in bed, the result, according to Johnson, of his having been "very unwell."⁷¹ Johnson deferred seeing Pritchard immediately and appointed a rendezvous for late in the afternoon of the same day. As the designated hour approached, Johnson packed his saddle bags with pork and a bottle of rum and rode off to the meeting place, which was "about two miles back from the Oxbow,"⁷² where Bayley was plowing at the time with two of his sons. Here Johnson conferred at length with Pritchard, Breakenridge and Sylvester. According to Johnson, "Pritchard and Breakenridge insisted on it that I would give my opinion how they should strike and at what time. I entirely refused and told them I must be excused. Capt. Breakenridge said that he would go right down into the Oxbow and take him from the plow. Capt. Pritchard swore by God that he was not going to be caught in the Great Meadow in day time. Pritchard was for attacking in the dead of the night which I most approved of as it would give the more time to secure them that were to be attacked, but [Sylvester's] opinion was that they should attack just at dark . . . [when] the guards would not be set . . . [when they could] take him without any trouble." During the course of the interview Johnson "earnestly requested of Pritchard that he would not take Gen. Bayley as my life and interest would be so much exposed by it. He said that he was sorry if that was the case, but said that his orders were positive and that he must make the Push."⁷³ Johnson says that it was "near six o'clock when I left them, better than two miles from home — a bad road — but I made all the haste I could to let General Bayley know, and the safest mea-

69. "Col. Thomas Johnson's Statement to the Committee of Newbury," *Proc. Vt. Hist. Soc.*, 1923-1925, p. 136.

70. *Ibid.*, pp. 134-138.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

72. Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

73. "Col. Thomas Johnson's Statement to the Committee of Newbury," *Proc. Vt. Hist. Soc.*, 1923-1925, p. 137.

sures.”⁷⁴ He does not say in his written accounts what means he used to warn Bayley. Wells in his *History of Newbury* follows the account given by Grant Powers in his *Historical Sketches of the Coos Country* that Johnson wrote on a slip of paper “Samson, the Philistines be upon Thee” and caused his brother-in-law Dudley Carleton to drop the message in sight of Bayley in the field where he was plowing; thus alerted, Bayley crossed the river out of danger to Haverhill.⁷⁵

White says that “we went as nigh to the house as we could and watched until the dusk of the evening, then pressed into the house. Several men ran out of the other door. Two guns were shot at them. One continental soldier [Ezra Gates] was wounded in his arm.”⁷⁶ Sylvester was the first man, with Barlow, to enter the house and it was he who wounded Gates. “To their inexpressible sorrow,” Smyth reported to Mathews, “the villain was not at home.”⁷⁷ As the alarm guns began to be “fired very thick all around,” according to White, “we got off as soon as we could and marched to Corinth in the night.” Pritchard took three of the guard with him as prisoners and, encountering James Bayley, a son of the General, on his retreat, took him as well.

Wells states that a force of thirty or forty men went in pursuit of Pritchard’s party as far as Topsham “where they surrounded the house of Thomas Chamberlain, and brought him and his son Jacob prisoners to Newbury.” Chamberlain was taken before the Committee of Safety at Haverhill where, according to Wells, he “was induced to tell what he knew, and was allowed to go home.”⁷⁸ His deposition follows:⁷⁹

I Thomas Chamberlin of Topsham west of Connecticut River Do testify and say that some time in the Month of June 1781 Joseph White of Newbury came to me at work not far from my house & told me, how he had been taken up at Newbury, & confined & how he got away, that he must go into Canada and requested my assistance. Accordingly I let him have provision & went about half a mile into the woods with him & gave him directions how steer & left him.⁸⁰ he told me that he had seen Joseph Harriman & W^m Fellows

74. “Memorandum in Johnson’s hand,” *Ibid.*, p. 112.

75. Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 99; Powers, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

76. PAC, B. 182, p. 547, White’s report to Smyth, June 30, 1782.

77. *Ibid.*, B. 177-2, p. 371, Smyth to Mathews, June 22, 1782.

78. Wells, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-102.

79. The deposition, dated “Haverhill June 18-1782,” covers two closely written pages of a double folio; the jurat is written on half of the third page. Where words have been crossed out and others substituted in their place, the changes are shown. MS in possession of the writer.

80. “As to Maj^r White, he was loyal from the beginning,” Sherwood wrote Mathews, “long distressed & imprisoned by Bayley & Johnson, etc., and at last broke away loaded with a heavy pair of handcuffs, & his arms pinioned behind, in this situation he remained three days, in which time he frequently saw his own house, but always surrounded with a rebel gang under arms . . . he at length found means to shew himself to Esq^r Chamberlain . . . and was by him supplied with provision after fasting three days.” PAC, B. 178, p. 76, Sherwood to Mathews, Feb. 13, 1783. White had been a major in the militia under General Bayley before the war. Both he and his son were among those forbidden to return to Newbury after the Revolution because of their tory activities and the family settled in Canada. Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 736.

That about the 15 or 20 of Feb^r 1782 Levi Sylvester of Newbury came to my house & told me that he had been taken a prisoner in the woods by Cap^t Prichard & carried into Canada, that he had agreed with said Prichard to serve him as a Spy [crossed out] & to carry letters to [crossed out] newspapers & intelligence & bring letters to & from Tho^s Johnson & others in this part of the Country and wanted to get me to go into the woods & the time & place he had agreed in his behalf — as he was watched he did not know that he could go — but when the time come he came out to my house & told me that he had got a letter from Tho^s Johnson & two newspapers & a letter from Esq^r Patterson — & as I did not incline to go with him myself, I let my son Jacob go with him, & they were gone about five days & met Prichard with a party of about 17 instead of three as was first agreed — on or about the mouth of Dog river — that the party under Prichard were Benjⁿ Patterson & another Patterson, Barlow, Kentfield⁸¹ etc. Levi on his return told me that he had got one letter for Johnson, another for Col. Bedel — & another for Esq^r Patterson — all which he gave to Johnson he likewise brought a letter to me from Jos. White the first time he came in informing me that if I knew of any good men that would go into Canada & engage with him they should be well rewarded, which I took no notice of —

That Levi believed they would be in again about the 20 May, by Waits River not far from my house to get further intelligence & he was to go & meet them — about which time white and one Miller came & stayed about 8 or 9 days — White said he had orders to take an intelligible prisoner as they must have some sort of orders but it was not intended that he should take any body & he did not mean to — at Whites request I went into his wife & got him some flour & pork, & I bought some rum of W^m Wallace⁸² for sd. White — & asked Wallace if he desired to have his name mentioned in Canada he told me he did not desire to have any concern with them —

Joseph White ju^r was out to see his father while he was there — White was not in my house at all this time but camped about a mile from it — White told me that they were strong in Canada, that there were a large number of indians that drew their allowance. I think about 16 hundred — I understood by him that Vermont & Canada were in Union — & he said that the strength in Canada with the strength of Vermont would be sufficient to make a stand on this side the lake & protect the State of Vermont — which I disputed with him [Fryday] Fryday 14 inst I was at Joseph Whites house in Newbury in the evening & Joseph White ju^r told me that Prichard & his father with a party were in & that he believed they would make a tryal for the old Genl. to carry him away I told him I believed they had better not, for it was likely some of them would get killed — Saturday morning Levi told me that there had news come from Albany that Shem Kentfield & another man had informed against him & that he must go off immediately — ~~That Gen^l Haldeman~~ [crossed out] the Gen^l on getting the intelligence sent the scout right out to secure him & if he was taken to burn Goals or

81. Shem Kentfield was arrested a short time later at No. 4 (Charlestown, N.H.) and taken to Albany where he was hanged as a spy. PAC, B. 177-2, p. 378, Joseph White, Jr. to Mathews, July 7, 1782. Prior to his execution he and one Vandike gave evidence against Levi Sylvester, that he "was a traitor and a spy." This was communicated to the authorities at Coos by Col. Benjamin Tupper, commanding at Albany, and "had [the news] been received six hours sooner we should have been able to have taken Sylvester." Moses Dow to Meshech Weare, June 16, 1782. Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 402.

82. William Wallace and Thomas Johnson were married to sisters, the daughters of Dudley Carleton. Wallace "was clerk to General Bayley, during a part at least of the war." Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 722.

any other buildings in order to get him — & to be sure to get him if possible — but if they were not able to get him, he would sent out another Scout big enough to get him if he burnt up the whole place

When White was at Topsham in May last he told me that Maj^r James Rogers with a party of about 20 — of which Benjⁿ Patterson was one — were at Mooretown as he supposed — as they were to go down Waits River — That Benjn. Patterson had said in Canada that Col Bedell was a man of as great influence as any in ~~Canada~~ [crossed out] New Hampshire & it was reported in New Hamps. before he left it that Bedel was to Command a Brigade in an Expedition against Canada, & that he had been sent to from Canada to engage to deliver up his Brigade to them, but that Bedel refused to treat upon the subject with any officer [crossed out] under the rank of a field officer — Accordingly that Maj^r Rogers was sent to treat with him on that matter

About the time that Rogers was in I told Levi that White told me that they were jealous in Canada that Bedel intended, when Rogers came in to lay a plan to take them all, but he thought there was no danger of that as Bedel had money due to him from Canada for supplies granted to Scouting parties heretofore. W^m Wallace ~~Levi further~~ [crossed out] told me that Rogers had sent to Johnson to come & see him — that Johnson went but could not find him

White told me that Wells (meaning Col Wells of Brattleboro as I took it) had sent intelligence into Canada this Spring, likewise that they had had intelligence from New York by the post or Channel of Intelligence that they had got established thro the Country from New York to Canada

Tho^s Chamberlain

Haverhill June 18 — 1782 —

State of New Hampshire)	Haverhill June 18th 1782	Thomas Chamberlin
	(within mentioned, personally appeared and being
Grafton ss)		solemnly cautioned and duly examined made
		solemn Oath that he had declared the truth, the
		whole truth and nothing but the truth relating the
		subject so far as his memory would serve — and the
		substance of the same is contained in the within
		written Deposition by him subscribed and that if any
		thing material further shall occur to his mind he will
		candidly declare the same _____

Sworn before us	Charles Johnston)	Justices of
		(
	Moses Dowe)	the Peace
			Quorum Unus

[endorsed]

Tho^s Chamberlin Declaration June 18. 1782

Reporting at length to Washington on the events surrounding the attempted kidnapping, Bayley observed that while Chamberlain's testimony

“gives much light in these matters, . . . as we have as yet no assistance, [we] cannot proceed to sever the wicked from amongst the righteous.”⁸³

Johnson immediately reported his role in the affair to the Committee of Safety and at the same time wrote to Pritchard describing how he had stopped would-be pursuers “till you had got off or I think you would [have] had to left some in the [Ox] Bow.” He offered the following explanation of how Bayley had been warned: “I hear since that the old _____ stopped in the Bow after he had done work for he mistrusted, as he had seen Col. Taplin go to my house on Friday. — 2nd. On Saturday morning Levi was seen at my house. 3rd. About one hour or two before you struck he received a letter from Saratoga from a Colonel with the account of Levi’s being a spy, and ordering him to be taken, so that he thought best to take care of himself till Levi should be taken up which would have been done that night, had he not been gone.” He reported that “on Sunday morning they sent and took Esqr. Chamberlain and his son up and sent them over to Haverhill on Monday. I understand they had a Court of Enquiry on them.” As suspicions began to center on Johnson, his danger was apparent and he again endeavored to assure Pritchard of his good faith: “You must certainly know had I a mind to have played the mischief with you that it was [in] my power to have taken you and your whole party, as I knew it in the morning. You may rely on it that all that came from me was by Sylvester being at my house in the morning, and my being out in the woods in the afternoon. — and just before night he [Bayley] received Shem Kentfield’s evidence, which gave him suspicion that it was best for him to keep out of the way till Sylvester was secured.” He concluded by pointing the finger of suspicion at Chamberlain: “I feel some concern about Esqr. Chamberlain that he hath given some account but it is only fears.”⁸⁴ At the same time, Johnson and Bedel informed White’s son-in-law, John McLean, that “Chamberlain had disclosed all the secrets he had been entrusted with and advised that all of us that had been concerned in the . . . affair to make our escape with all speed.” Upon receipt of this information Colonel Taplin fled precipitately with his two sons to Canada, where he reported that in his opinion “Thomas Chamberlain has been the betrayer . . . and no other person.”⁸⁵

Pritchard was enraged at the failure of the attempt, which he attributed to his having had to accept White in place of Patterson as his guide, and to

83. Bayley to Washington, June 29, 1782, *The Papers of George Washington*, vol. 201, Library of Congress.

84. Letters from Thomas Johnson to Capt. Pritchard, *Proc. Vt. Hist. Soc., 1923-1925*, pp. 113-115.

85. PAC, B. 177-2, p. 410, John Taplin’s information, July 31, 1782.

following the former's plan, which he had done at the behest of Sherwood, "till I found when near the place that White was as ignorant as a fool and nothing appeared as I expected from what he had told me when at a distance." After entering the house, "by intimidating two that was there," Pritchard "found that Bayley did not sleep at his own house and carried all his papers that was of value across the river, just as Mr. Patterson did inform [me] from Co. Bedel, though contradicted by White." "Sir," Pritchard wrote Mathews, "I beg to be excused from secret service unless I can pursue plans of my own adopting with[out] being intercepted by White or any one else." He thereupon offered to lead a party of thirty men in an expedition to the Upper Coos where he reported there were "near 90 men that can and does carry arms against us . . . on the east side of Connecticut River." He proposed to "reduce them to take the oath of allegiance to the crown"; those who did so, he "would leave on their farms, but the worst of them I would kill or bring off."⁸⁶ The proposal was ignored and the attempt on Bayley proved to be the last time the Connecticut River settlements were to be alarmed by the familiar report that Pritchard was "in — with a party" from Canada. A short time later he turned his talents to carrying messages to British headquarters in New York, a particularly hazardous service which had ended for Joe Bettys, and a number of others, on the gallows.

Following the unsuccessful attempt, two of Pritchard's men, Joseph White and John Cross, remained behind to procure intelligence, the former on orders from Sherwood and the latter at the direction of Smyth. They went together to Col. Taplin's in Corinth, where they were joined by Col. Nehemiah Lovewell, a prominent figure in Newbury, who indicated a desire to speak with White. Meeting in the woods, Lovewell confided to the two agents that "we had a friend that we made use of with two coats." Bayley had been warned, he continued, by "the man that fetched you some pork into the woods," and had the attack come fifteen minutes later, they would have found the guard reinforced by twenty-five men, ready "to make a prey of Capt. Pritchard's party."⁸⁷ Both White and Cross submitted their reports of the interview to Smyth, in the absence of Sherwood, who was in Quebec occupied with the Vermont negotiations. Smyth, who was convinced of Johnson's good faith, expressed his doubts about the reports to Mathews: "Messrs. White and Cross are arrived from Connecticut

86. *Ibid.*, p. 367, Pritchard to Mathews, June 21, 1782.

87. *Ibid.*, B. 182, pp. 544-547, John Cross to Smyth, June 29, 1782; Joseph White to Smyth, June 30, 1782. Since White stated in his report that Pritchard returned from the interview with Johnson "with pork and a bottle of rum which I understood that he received from Colonel Johnson," Lovewell's carefully guarded meaning was unmistakable. *Ibid.*

River. I enclose you their reports, and I assure you I don't know what to make of them, or Mr. White, at present, but will, as soon as Captain Sherwood returns, inform you of something very strange respecting the visitors of Connecticut."⁸⁸ Smyth questioned Bayley's son James, who had been brought in by Pritchard, "by what channel his father received intelligence of a party being in the country. He gave for answer that Col. Johnson had rode that morning (with his saddle bags under him) past his house, and did not ride far till he turned into the woods, where he remained for some time, and then returned home. As it was well known that Johnson was then unwell and seldom went abroad, and his turning so suddenly off the road into thick woods, it gave cause of suspicion, and they thought he went to see some people secreted in the woods, on which he (the General's son) dispatched a man to his father to put him on his guard, and that evening his father removed." Smyth concluded that "on comparing this account with [Johnson's] letters, I think Col. Johnson is not to blame."⁸⁹ His good opinion of Johnson was reinforced by that of Joseph White, Jr., who had been an active accomplice with Sylvester and Johnson in Newbury since the previous January. "Col. Johnson was kind and true," he reported, "and I am not afraid to trust my life with him any time that the General is pleased to send me for intelligence. Let any one say what they will against him, I am satisfied with his conduct and am certain that he is an enemy to Government that will say anything against him."⁹⁰

Col. Taplin's charges against Thomas Chamberlain, upon his arrival in Canada a short time later, further fueled the debate as to where blame lay for the failure of the mission. Sherwood deplored the resulting factionalism, which he recognized as being fatal to the morale of the secret service. "I have seen Col. Taplin on his way to Quebec," he wrote Mathews, "and am sorry to find from his account of the disputes and jealousies at St. Johns that the business of procuring intelligence has with some become a consideration of self interested views, rather than the promotion of his Majesty's service, and this is carried to so great a length that some of the loyalists lately come from Connecticut River are really led to believe that the service is carried on by juntos & parties at variance, such for instance as Pritchard's & Patterson's party, Sherwood's & Smyth's, etc., and all this is so cunningly & slyly insinuated that I believe the Doctor does not yet know anything of the affair." Sherwood suggested that Taplin "be examined on the subject of Col. Bedel, Pritchard, Patterson, etc., which it

88. *Ibid.*, B. 182, p. 551, Smyth to Mathews, July 2, 1782.

89. *Ibid.*, B. 177-2, p. 388, Smyth to Mathews, July 17, 1782.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 378, Joseph White, Jr. to Mathews, July 7, 1782.

seems is the foundation of all these cabals and especially of implacable spite against poor honest Maj. White.”⁹¹

Sherwood continued long after to ponder certain unanswered aspects of the affair, writing to Mathews eight months later: “the great mystery to me is how comes Johnson to know that White reported against him. I sent the report to his Excellency, and never mentioned it to any person excepting Col. Taplin who was concerned in it, and there has been no party over there since, to my knowledge. I believe sincerely that Bayley, Bedel, Johnson and old Patterson have their friends among us, and that they are all together a very dangerous combination. I have long been of this opinion, and was still more confirmed in it last fall by Mr. Chamberlain’s requesting to be brought here with Johnson to prove to his head that he was a traitor, and that his wife did advertise Bayley to take care of himself when Pritchard was out, which would certainly have ruined the whole party had not Mr. White, after finding that Johnson was acquainted with the plan, insisted on making the assault at dusk instead of waiting till midnight, which was the time agreed on between Pritchard and Johnson; and in this instance there is a glaring evidential circumstance of Johnson’s treachery, for Bayley had assembled 8 men and the whole town was warned to be at his house by 10 o’clock, and Bayley has since accused Johnson of treachery for not acquainting him of the right hour the assault was to be made, and says that Johnson meant to save Pritchard, and keep friends on both sides. The reason Mr. Johnson does not address himself to the Doctor and me, I suppose, is because he knows that we have told Pritchard that we suspected him to be a traitor; at least, I cannot conjecture any other reason.” At the same time, he affirmed his complete confidence in White: “I certainly will, if required, pledge my own faith for the loyalty of Mr. White and his son.”⁹²

The jealousies and suspicions fostered by the various “juntos & parties at variance” lingered to the end of the war, with a demoralizing effect on the service which proved Sherwood’s apprehensions to have been well founded. Operations never again reached the level of activity triumphantly reported by Sherwood on the eve of Major Rogers’ departure for his intended meeting with Timothy Bedel, when there were “no less than 47 men in different parts of the rebel frontier on secret service.” With the end of hostilities in sight, it became increasingly difficult to maintain a rigid military discipline among the adventurous spirits engaged in the service.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 438, Sherwood to Mathews, Aug. 16, 1782.

92. *Ibid.*, B. 178, p. 76, Sherwood to Mathews, Feb. 13, 1783. Chamberlain had written Sherwood the previous October that “I absolutely know [Johnson] was the one [who betrayed the plot].” *Ibid.*, B. 177-2, pp. 517-518, Chamberlain to Sherwood, Oct. 3, 1782.

Chittenden and Ethan Allen, still deeply involved in the negotiations with Haldimand, complained that several of the scouts had been to public dances in Arlington, Vermont, "next door to the Governor, and there is now one Holliburt there, recruiting, who they are apprehensive of his doing some mischief, as he is much given to drink." Pritchard, in transit through Vermont to New York, promoted an illegal scheme for the importation of beef into Canada, prompting Chittenden and Allen to request that he not be permitted to enter the state again because of the danger his indiscretions posed for them.⁹³ "Capt. Pritchard made about fifty bargains when he went through Vermont," Sherwood reported to Mathews.⁹⁴ Haldimand considered having him court-martialed, but relented upon "reflecting that he has on many occasions been very active . . . but as St. Johns is a very unfit place for a person of his intriguing disposition," Haldimand thought it unsafe to let him remain there and ordered him to Quebec.⁹⁵

With the declaration of peace in the spring of 1783 came the end of loyalist hopes for the return of Vermont to British sovereignty and the realization that for those who had borne arms for the King there was to be no going back to their former homes. Sherwood played a leading role in the settlement of Upper Canada by disbanded loyalists and continued to merit in peace time the total confidence placed in him by the British authorities during the war. He died at Three Rivers in the summer of 1798 while taking rafts to Quebec. In 1964, the Ontario Historic Sites Board erected a plaque in his memory in Augusta Township, where he had settled.

Thomas Chamberlain survived his complicity in the Bayley plot and following the Revolution he was elected and reelected justice of the peace, an office he had held under the crown. John Taplin and Asa Porter retained their considerable property and influence, despite their well known tory activities during the war. For "poor honest Maj. White," however, the end of hostilities did not mean the end of his personal misfortunes, and he was destined to receive a further pommeling at the hands of his fellow-townsmen in Newbury before taking leave of them for good. "Confiding in the Treaty of Peace for protection," he returned to Newbury with his son in March 1784 to dispose of some property, having determined upon settling in Canada. The visit was too soon, however, for time to have worked its healing effect on old grievances, and the last appearance of the two in town with Pritchard proved to be yet a fresh and bitter memory among the in-

93. *Ibid.*, B. 178, p. 15, Ensign Thomas Smyth to Mathews, Jan. 8, 1783.

94. *Ibid.*, B. 177-2, p. 656, Sherwood to Mathews, Dec. 3, 1782.

95. *Ibid.*, B. 139, p. 238, Haldimand to Riedesel, Dec. 2, 1782. Pritchard's part in the attempted post-war loyalist settlement at Missisquoi Bay, in defiance of General Haldimand, is described in Thomas C. Lampee, "The Missisquoi Loyalists," *Proc. Vt. Hist. Soc.*, VI, No. 2 (June 1938), pp. 81-139.

habitants. "In the night they were taken by a party consisting of Gen. Bayley's family and connections," wrote Asa Porter to General Haldimand, "carried around the town on an old horse, naked, through the greater part of the night, and then confined in gaol without necessary clothing, fire or provisions, until last evening, when Captain White was dragged out of the prison and beaten with whips and clubs in the most inhuman manner, and ordered to leave the place, never to return upon pain of death. His son remains in gaol beset with a pack of blood hounds, expecting his fate."⁹⁶

Levi Sylvester occupies a special place in the history of the town of Irasburg, Vermont. Two of the first settlers in that town while fishing on the Black River in the summer of 1800 came by accident upon a cabin found to belong to Sylvester, "a hunter by profession and practice," and his Indian wife, described as one who "liked the wilderness as well as any of her race." According to an early town historian, "he was one of the first board of selectmen, holding the place because he was elected, and not because he wanted the position. He did not visit the early settlers, and saw them only when they called on him." When "the only woman who ever visited at the house" came to call, "Mrs. Sylvester had not seen a woman's face for 4 years." "After a few years he moved over the river," where he remained until a road was cut nearby, "which let in too much sunshine to suit him, so he packed up and went off north, into some Canadian wilderness, where he probably ended his days. . . . To the early settlers of the town Levi Sylvester was an enigma; his reticence, and his solitary habits were the theme of the settlers. . . . Much might be written in relation to this man and his family; but we will only say that one reason known to us sufficiently accounts for his peculiarities. He had been a tory and British spy during the Revolutionary war and he had been the leading spirit at the sack of Royalton — a guide to Capt. Pritchard, who surprised the fort at Newbury — had captured the Bayleys and Elkinses at Peacham, and carried them into captivity — had been with the notorious Sir John Johnson when he made his descent from his rendezvous on an island in Lake Ontario upon the defenseless inhabitants of the State of New York. His antecedents had been such that he had good reason for preferring the wilderness as his home."⁹⁷ Since it is clear that none of these charges, except the connection with Pritchard, could have been true, the memory of Irasburg's first settler has been unduly blackened. In 1832, being then seventy-seven years of age and a resident of the town of Catherine, Tioga County, N. Y., Sylvester applied for and was

96. *Ibid.*, B. 75-2, p. 38, Asa Porter to Haldimand, March 5, 1784.

97. E. P. Colton, "History of Irasburgh," *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, ed. Abby Maria Hemenway, III (Claremont, N.H., 1877), p. 246.

granted a pension by the United States for his service during the early years of the Revolution, before he was beguiled by Pritchard. His application states that "when he first entered the service he lived at Newbury in the State of Vermont; after the close of the war he continued to live at the same place last aforesaid fourteen years, then lived in Irasburg, County of Orleans and State of Vermont 12 years, then lived in Scipio, Cayuga County and State of New York three years, from which time he has lived in Catherine to the present time."⁹⁸

Although Thomas Johnson prospered materially after the war, becoming the "owner of great tracts of land in Newbury and elsewhere" and being elected Town Representative of Newbury for nine terms,⁹⁹ the consequences of his double role during the Revolution afflicted him for the remainder of his days. Commenting on this aspect of his life to a near-contemporary reading public, Grant Powers observed that "all know what aspersions were heaped upon Col. Johnson for the part he was said to perform at that eventful period, and what pain it inflicted on him through life."¹⁰⁰ Such was the bitterness and intensity of the ill-feeling against him that it survived by several years his own death, which occurred in 1819. Wells, after remarking that "seventy years ago [i.e., ca. 1830] the name of Tory was so obnoxious that it was hardly possible to offend a man more than to call him by a name which implied that either he or his immediate ancestor had taken the unpopular side in the great struggle," goes on to relate that "many years ago the word 'Tory' was found scratched upon the stone in the Ox-bow cemetery, which marked the grave of a certain revolutionary officer, whose situation during the war had made him the object of much annoying criticism from his enemies. The culprit was discovered, and a bitter feud resulted between two families which out-lasting that generation."¹⁰¹

98. Levi Sylvester, Revolutionary War Pension Application, S. 14464, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

99. Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 587.

100. Powers, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

101. Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 119.