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[Part I]

JOURNAL  
Miller's Bay 26<sup>th</sup> Oct<sup>r</sup> 1780

By CAPTAIN JUSTUS SHERWOOD [1747-1798]  
*Queen's Loyal Rangers*

*One of the unanswered questions in Vermont history, a question that has haunted Vermont historians, and Vermonters also, for over one hundred and fifty years is reflected in Captain Sherwood's personal and private journal or diary. The question has to do with the extent and purpose of Ethan Allen's negotiations with General Frederick Haldimand in command of British forces in Canada: did Allen seriously consider attempting to maneuver Vermont into British hands? In Part I of the journal we have the meeting of Captain Sherwood and Allen and the Captain's proposal. The text we print is an exact copy of the original journal now in the British Museum in London with the exception of slight changes in spelling and punctuation and the use of indentations to indicate paragraph structure, the purpose of the changes being to aid in easier and more accurate reading. The copy was secured by Vice President Jerome A. Johnson during his recent summer of research in England. Editor.*

**R**<sup>ECD</sup> His Excellency's Instructions for a negotiation with the State of Vermont, and Major Carleton's order to proceed to that state with a Flag. Sett off at 7.0 clock in the evening with a Drum Fife and five privates with Capt. Chipman and his servant, in a cutter. Went about six miles against a strong head wind. 27th Embarkd at 6. 0.clock. Still a head wind. Encampd six miles above Ticonderoga. 28th—Embarkd at 4 o'clock. At one Landed Chipman his servant & Baggage at Skeansborough, then proceeded to the head of East Bay. Landed at 4. afternoon. Sett off. Immediately with the Drum Fife and two men—Leaving a Flag and three men with the cutter—Arrivd at 7 0 clock at Col. Herrick's Camp. A Frontier post of 300 men at the mills about 4 miles west of the Block house in Castleton[.] was Blind folded & led to Col. Herricks room. He demanded my Business. I informd him I was sent by Maj. Carleton to

negotiate a Cartel for Exchange of Prisoners—that I had Dispatches from his Excellency Gen. Haldiman. and from Maj. Cartleton to Gov. Chidinton and Gen. Allen. Col. Herrick said Gen. Allen Commanded at Castleton and that my Dispatches should be forwarded without delay.

At about 11 the Evening I recvd a message from Gen. Allen. 29th had an Interview with Gen. Allen. After Breakfast removd to Major Clarks house. Gen. Allen Summonsd a Council of ten field Officers & inform them that I was sent to negotiate a Cartel for Exchange of prisoners. But as he found my instructions was somewhat Discretionary he desird (previous to Entering on business) to have a short conference with me by himself that he might Clearly Understand my Ideas & assist me in Explaining my Business to them—to this they consented.

I walkd out with him and after much conversation, informd him that I had some Business of importance with him, but before I Comunicated it must request his honour as a gentleman, that should it not please him, he would take no advantage of me nor ever mention it while I remaind in the country. He said he would if it was no Damd Arnold Plan to sell his Country and his own honour by Betraying the trust reposd in him. I replyd my Business with him was in my opinion on a very honourable nature, but as I did not know how far his opinion & mine would differ, should insist on his most Sacred promise that in whatever Light he might view it he would not Expose me. To this after Some consideration he consented.

I then proceeded to tell him that Gen. Haldiman was no stranger [to] their disputes with the other states respecting Jurisdiction and that His Excellency was perfectly well informd of all that had lately passed between Congress and Vermont and of the fixd intentions of Congress never to their being a seperate state, that from Gen. Allens Common Character His Excellency Gen. Haldiman Concievd he was a man of too much good sense and solid reason, that Congress was only duping them and waited for a favourable opportunity to Crush them and that this was a proper time for them to Cast off the Congress yoke and resume their former Allegiance to the King of Great Britain, by doing which they would secure to themselves those Privileges they had so long Contended for with New York.

I then made known to him the Gen's. proposals, then Expressd my own anxious desire that they would accept of them. Assuring him that it was not from any selfish motives of my own but the tender sentiments of regard and friendship which I felt for the

people of Vermont that induced me to wish them to accept of those proposals and to save themselves from that General Calamity that seemd to threaten the other states.

Gen. Allen observd that the proposals, so far as they respected his personal promotion, had not the Weight of a straw with him, that he was not to be purchasd at any rate, that he had been offered a Lt. Cols. Commission on Condition of Changing sides while in Captivity which he refusd, as he ever meant to be governd by the strictest rules of honour and Justice. But that since the proposals seemd Materially to concern the whole people of Vermont, whose Libertys & propertys for a number of years past and was much dearer to him than his own life, he should take them into very serious consideration. He then said we must go in as we had already been too long together, that I might rest assurd our present conference should remain a secret. He advisd me to tell the Council that I had Explained my business Respecting the Cartel to him and desire him to Assist me in Communicating it to them.

We then went in and he laid Gen. Haldimans and Maj. Carletons letters before the Council which was read by Maj. Fay. They appeard well satisfyd with the Contents of them except that part of Maj. Carletons letter respecting the Limits of the truce. Some of them suspected a design on the frontiers of New York while the negociation was on foot with Vermont. To this I became a pledge on the part of Gov. that no movement would be made in the offensive by Maj. Carleton and inform the Maj. of it in a letter by Gen. Allens Flag. After this Gen. Allen wrote circular letters to all his officers Commanding Frontier Posts informing them of the truce and Cessation of hostilitys—commanding them to Call in all their scouts and not to suffer any more to be sent out during the present truce. Those letters was read to me in Council. About one o clock the Council broke up, and Maj. Fay was sent Express with my dispatches to Benington.

I had another short conference with Gen. Allen the Evening—30th Conversd with him till 2 o clock free from any restraint, informd him I had brout written proposals and had secreted them, but could procure them if he thought proper. He advisd me to let them rest, said he would send me Col. Ira Allen and Maj. Fay, that he would open the Business to them so far that I might venture to shew them the proposals, but said I must not communicate to them the whole of our Conversation. Must be very cautious not to exhibit the smallest Idea to them of anything than Neutrality nor Even that to take

place Except Congress force them to it by their tyranny and obstinate refusal to grant Vermont her Just & lawful Claims.

The Result of our several Conferences is as follows. Gen. Allen says he finds himself surrounded with Enemys on Every side. The most inveterate is New York—that he is heartily weary of war and wishes once more to Enjoy the sweets of peace and devote himself to his Philosophical s[t]udys. That he is sincerely attachd to the Lybertys of America, and Cannot Cherish the remotest thought of bearing Arms against his Country while Virtuously Contending for Lyberty, and that nothing (short of the same Tyrranical proceedings from Congress towards Vermont which Congress at first complaind of suffering from Great Britain, and the manifest appearance of the total subversion of the Lybertys & propertys of many thousands of honest people now inhabitants of Vermont) should Ever induce him to harbour the most distant Idea of deviating from the Cause he has been so long Engagd in, and for which he has been so Great a Sufferer. And was he Ever so much inclined to take part with Britain it is not in his power to do it at present—for in the first place should he now make a declaration of that nature his own people would Cutt off his head—but allowing he could reconcile them to such a plan they are by no means able to defend themselves, nor is Gen. Haldiman at present able to send a force sufficient to protect them, that he is positive the Neighbouring provinces would on such an occasion pour in upon them thirty thousand men in thirty days time—that being fully persuaded Congress never intends to acknowledge the Jurisdiction of Vermont, but on the Contrary has predetermined to support the Claims of New York he intends Shortly with the Assistance of the Gov. and Council to publish manifestos setting forth the Tyrranical proceedings of Congress and the necessity Vermont is under of declaring herself a neutral State, that after these have had time to Circulate, should Congress Continue obstinate, Vermont will Declare herself a neutral power free and independent of any other power on Earth and will invite all people to a free trade with her,—he expects this will draw on him the resentment and force of Congress. He shall Closely watch their Motions and as soon as he finds they are raising a force against him, he will march with his own Brigade and take possession of Albany and invite all friends to the Lybertys of America to Join him. He is confident he shall soon be reinforced by some thousands from the Frontiers of the Neighbouring Provinces already well attachd to the State of Vermont.—Especially the County Berkshire which is the Northern frontier of Massachusetts has a well

regulated Militia of near 4000 men and from their Vicinity and likeness of Manners are very anxious to Join and make part of Vermont state. If he should be obligd to retreat from Albany, he will make a stand at Ticonderoga—then rather than be ruind by Congress will ask help from Canada and thinks it will be much for the Intrest of Gov. that Gen. Haldiman then has a force not only sufficient to Support him, but to Establish a post at Albany and another at No. 4 or Benington which he thinks will require at least 20000 men. This he thinks will be the readiest method of bringing this whole Contest to a speedy decision in Case Great Britain is able to Command the seas and prevent a french invasion by the way of St. Lawrence. But if Britain is not able to do this, he has no dependance on any protection Gen. Haldiman can offer, hopes therefore that he will Consider how far he is able to support Vermont—should he have any proposals to make hereafter to Gen. Haldiman they be nearly as follows—He will Expect to Command his own forces—Vermont must be a Gov. seperate from and Independant of any other Province in America—must Choose their own Civil Officers and Representatives, be entitled to all the Privileges offerd to the other states by the Kings Commissioners—the Newhampshire Grants as Charterd by Benning Wentworth Gov. of N.hampshire, must be Confirmd free from any Patents or Claims from N.York or any other Province. He desires me to inform His Excellency that a revolution of this nature must be a work of time, that it is impossible to bring so many different minds into one Channel on a sudden, hopes he will not be anxious to hurry matters on too fast as that will Certainly ruin the whole. He says it is not in his power to wait on Gen. Haldiman or Maj. Carleton as that would Create too much suspicion—that he dare not at present Send or receive any letters on the subject—would therefore propose to keep up the negociation by Flags—would Recommend that Gen. Haldimans Flags be always sent with some Business to the State of Newyork as well as to Vermont—thinks this would Prevent suspicion—Desires this may be kept a secret from all the world but those already Employd—Except His Excellency should [find] it absolutely necessary to Employ another—as he is Certain N.york has their spys in Canada Constantly and are at present very suspicious of his and Vermonts Conduct.

If Congress Should Grant Vermont a seat in that Assembly as a Seperate State, this negociation to be at an End & be kept secret on both sides. Wishes however that the Cartel of Exchange of Prisoners may be Establishd and Observ,d with honour—and if the officers

prisoner in Canada Cannot be Exchangd the Ensuing Winter, he Requests they may have Lyberty on parole and Engages that all officers belonging to the Army in Canada shall have their Parole immediately and the Soldiers have such Enlargement as can be Given with Safety.

About 3 this afternoon Gen. Allen parted with me for Bennington. Left with me one Capt. Parker, a very Civil Gentleman, with instructions to treat me with all possible Politeness. This evening I had notice that Maj. Ebenr. Allens Scouts had discovered 20 Indians in Pitsford and that another scout of his had discovered that Maj. Carleton had returnd with his whole detachment from Millers Bay to Ticonderoga and was drawing some Boats over the Landing—had sent a detachment on the East side, etc. I was soon after put under the strict charge of two Centrys—some said my life should answer for the consequences, some said one thing and some another, but all Conspird to make me very Uneasy. I wrote to Maj. Allen assuring him of Maj. Carletons Good Faith, informd him that to dispute his Good intentions was disputing the Faith of Gov. as he acted by the Genls. order—as to the Indians if there had been any seen, they must be stragglng partys from Mr. Haughton—if so they would not attempt anything Except Hunger necessitated them to it. Advisd him to wach their motions and rest assurd that if they destroyd any property belonging to the Inhabitants I Would give Security for the Payment—Requested him to let me know wheather I could be of any service to him on this occasion etc. To this I got no answer—and I soon after found that the whole was a farce of Maj. Allens own Contriving on purpose to alarm the Country.—

31st Recvd an order from Maj. Allen to March with all my party into the Country under the Charge of Capt. Eli Brownson and 20 men. Capt. Brownson informd me that I must not speake to any person without his knowledge as that was his positive order from Maj. Allen—Marchd this day 28 miles to Pollit. All this day I found the people much Allarnd and the roads full of Militia marching up in Consequence of Expresses from Maj. Allen—the people appeard much Exasperated, was very Crabed and insulting to me.

Nov. 1st Marchd 10 miles in a tedious snow storm. 2d Marchd 20 miles to Arlington. This Evening Recvd a message from Gov. Chidinton Expressing his disaprobation of Maj. Allens Conduct and his orders to Capt. Brownson that I should be treated in a maner that an Officer of a Flag had a right to Expect and by no means to keep me any longer Under the least restraint. 3d this Evening Maj. Clark

returnd from a Flag to Maj. Carleton and his report much calmd the doubts of the populous.

6th Recvd an order from Gov. Chidinton for my departure—7th hired horses for myself and party sett off for Castleton Escorted by Capt. Brownson. 8th a snow storm this day. arrivd at Castleton—9th Col. Allen & Maj. Fay arrivd as Commissioners to negociate the Cartel—forbid by Maj. Ebenr. Allen to proceed till the 11th towards Night. Then sett off & went to Est Bay, found it froze about 2 inches thick. 12th brake the Ice about 3 miles. 13th brake Ice 4 miles. 14th Allen & Fay turnd back & said they would come to St Johns by Ice as soon as possible—I had the day before shewn them the Gen's. proposals. After perusing them & discoursing Largely on the subject, we burnd them—they then gave me the Pamphlets and other papers from Gen. Allen with strict injunctions to secure them Every night on shore for fear of partys from the State of New york. They insisted and I promisd that when they came in I would shew them all my authority and instructions from Gen. Haldiman to treat with them—after renewing my promiss to Use my influence with the Gen. that their officers should have parole, they left me with 10 days Bread and Beef. We this day break Ice about 3 miles—15th brake 2 miles. 16th 3 miles to the fidders Elbow from the 17th to the 19th. Break the Ice about 11 miles to the open Lake—This evening I sent the cutter forward with orders to proceed as fast as possible to Ti & there wait for me, then went back myself & one man by land to Skeansborough. Bout 5 Bushels of Indian corn and as much provision as I could from the Inhabitants & Borrowd 30 lb. of pork from Ens. McDonald—in the morning Carryd the Corn and provision on our backs by land 3 miles to So. Bay. There took a skiff which was the property of a Mr. Stockwell & sent him word that necessity obligd me to take it & that Mr. Jones would pay him for it or I should send him as good a one in spring—from this to 21st proceeded no farther than Chimney point by reason of waiting one day for Capt. McDonalds family—here met Mr. Marsh with a Flag to Gen. Allen—advisd him to turn back—he said he could not—sent a letter by him to Gen. Allen keeping a copy, etc. 21st took in 2 men 4 women 4 children at Millers Bay. They had been 4 days without provision—I now found our provision very short, having been some days on half Rations & now but 30 Rations of Bread & Meat to divide among 25 hungry persons—with a half pint of Indian corn pr day to each person—22d proceeded 2 miles against a strong head wind and a tedious snow storm—obligd to ly by the rest of this day—23d a

favourable wind run about 60 miles to Tea Kettle Island. 24th Arrivd at Pt aux Fare and Rowed this Night to Ile aux noix. 26th about 10 o'clock this morning arrivd Safe at St. Johns. Waited on Maj. Carleton Deliverd him my Dispatches. 28th Sett of with the Maj. for Quebec. 31st arrivd at Quebec.

J. Sherwood.

NOTES ON PART I OF THE JOURNAL

We intend to print, so far as they can be found, original copies of all documents bearing on the Allen-Sherwood-Haldimand negotiations and all other vital issues that bear upon Vermont's history. H. E. Wardner made use of a photostatic copy of the journal in the Canadian Archives and came to this conclusion as to Allen's part in the negotiations: "Pharisee or patriot, hypocrite or hero, view him as we will, we must admit the daring of Ethan Allen in putting his neck into a noose in his efforts to shape the destiny of his State." [*The Birthplace of Vermont*, p. 519.] We intend to come to a final decision, and we hope a definitive one, regarding Allen and his associates, using not the opinions and conclusions of others, but the evidence in original documents. It is quite possible that our wide-ranging members may supply clues to items that are in personal or family possessions or may know where such items exist. Our plans for a five-volume history of the state, based on fresh research, call for careful review of all doubtful or murky phases of the state's history.

Captain Sherwood's journal, brief as it is, vividly suggests the dramatic, colorful forces moving through the hours and days he mentions; and then we have the personalities themselves, most of them woven lastingly into the fabric of the state's existence, past, present, and future. Our VHS member, Roy L. Gale in his biographical sketch, "A Vermonter's Tribute to a Loyalist," in *News and Notes*, December 1955, gave us a very satisfactory picture of Capt. Sherwood which will do until we manage a more extended study. General Frederick Haldimand seems to have won the full respect of Allen and his officers and close associates. He was born in Switzerland in 1781, entered British service in 1754, and in America won distinction through his defense of Oswego, N. Y., in 1759 against a force of 4000 French and Indians. Later he organized a regiment, known as the Royal Americans, made up largely of Swiss and Germans from Pennsylvania. He has been criticized by some French-Canadian historians for severe treatment of French sympathizers with the Americans, but the final verdict seems to be that he acted with moderation even though energetically. He will appear again as we review the events associated with Allen.

Other figures in the drama played in the journal are worthy of notice. "Skensborough" (really Skenesborough, now Whitehall, N. Y., at the southern end of Lake Champlain), was named after Col. Philip Skene, a British officer who owned what might be called an estate after the English manner in that section. Capt. Chipman was an American officer, released on parole, who promised to secure the release of a British officer imprisoned by the Americans—a promise, it seems, that he did not keep. Allen's reference to "no Damned Arnold plan" has point: Major André had been hanged on

October 2nd, and both Allen and Sherwood knew what might be in store for them. Major Carleton commanded the British forces at Crown Point. Major Ebenezer Allen was a distant kinsman of Ethan. At the time of the interview, Capt. Sherwood was twenty-eight years of age, and Allen forty-three. Allen had been a prisoner of war from September 1775 until the spring of 1778.

Readers will find some divergencies in the text such as variations in spelling; some of these are the result, no doubt, of Sherwood's haste in writing and also are the usage of his time. The text, however, follows, not a photostat copy (in which the accurate reproduction of writing a hundred and fifty years old is difficult), but the actual handwriting itself. Mr. Johnson reports that Mr. John McKenzie, assistant Curator of the Department of Manuscripts of the British Museum, and his associate, Mr. S. J. Arthur, were most helpful in the research done in the Museum. Mr. Arthur made the copy of the journal.

Part II, which completes the journal, will appear in our July issue.

