

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

FORT STANWIX:

UNTENABLE, OR THE KEY TO DEFENDING THE MOHAWK VALLEY?

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BY

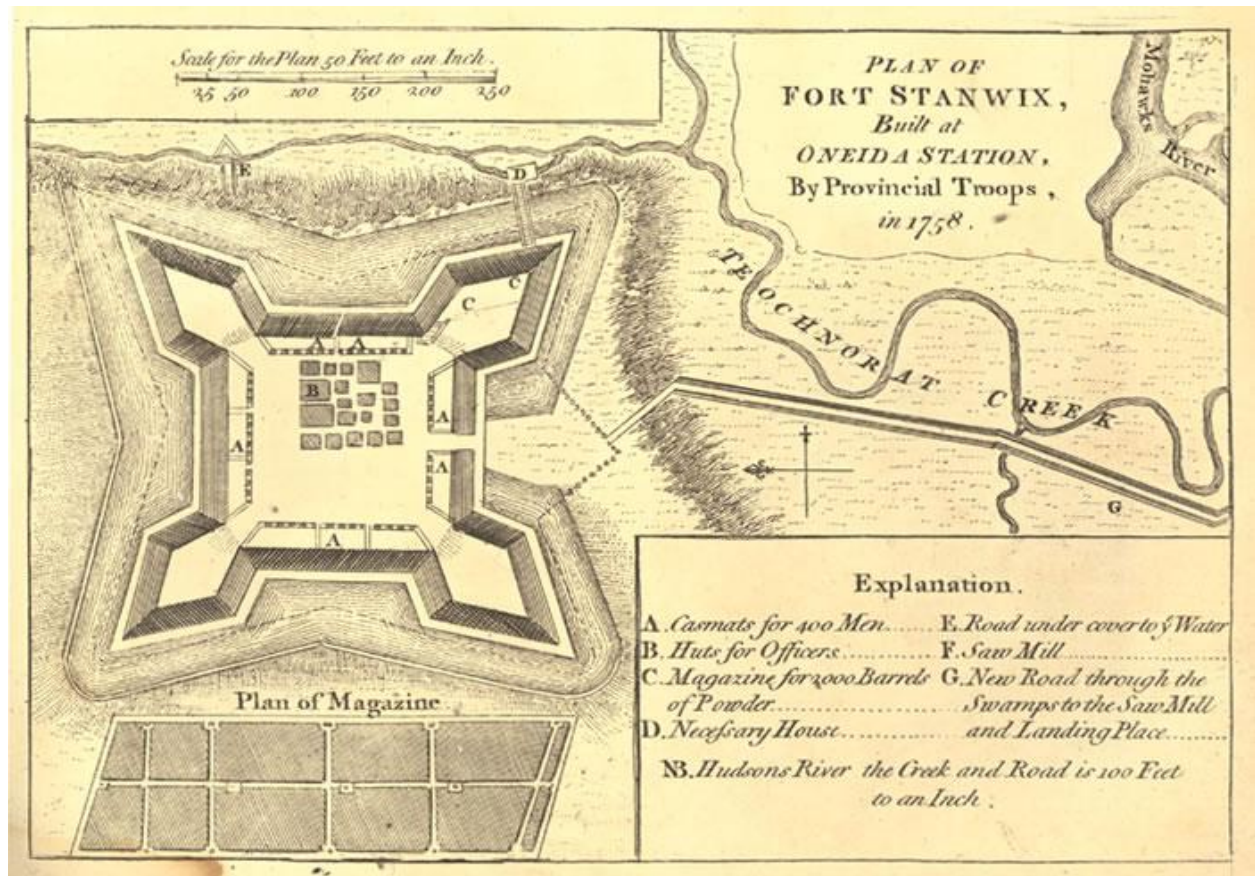
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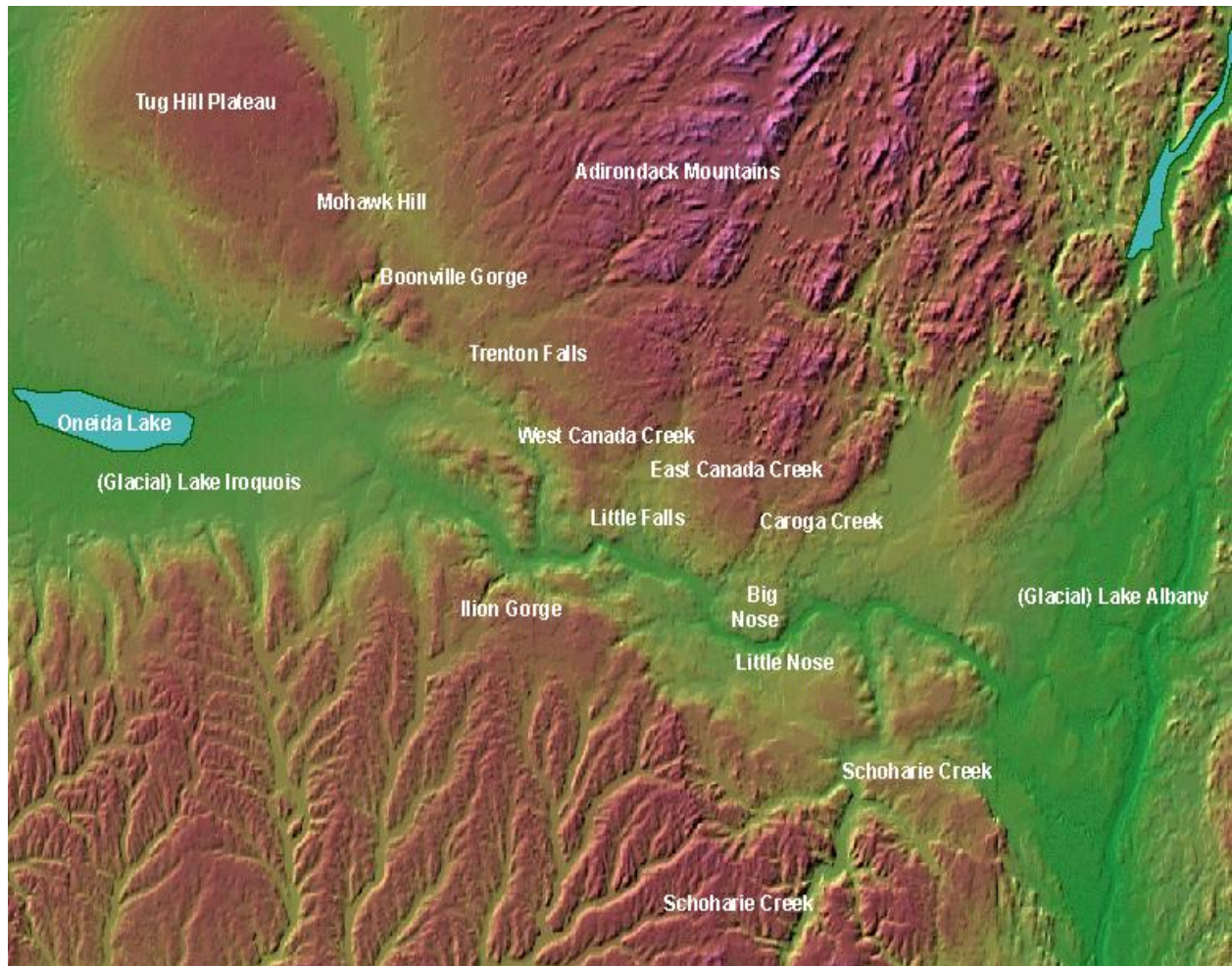
1758 plans for the construction of Fort Stanwix¹

¹ Plan of Fort Stanwix Built at Oneida Station by Provincial Troops in 1758, www.googleimages.com (accessed on December 14, 2010).



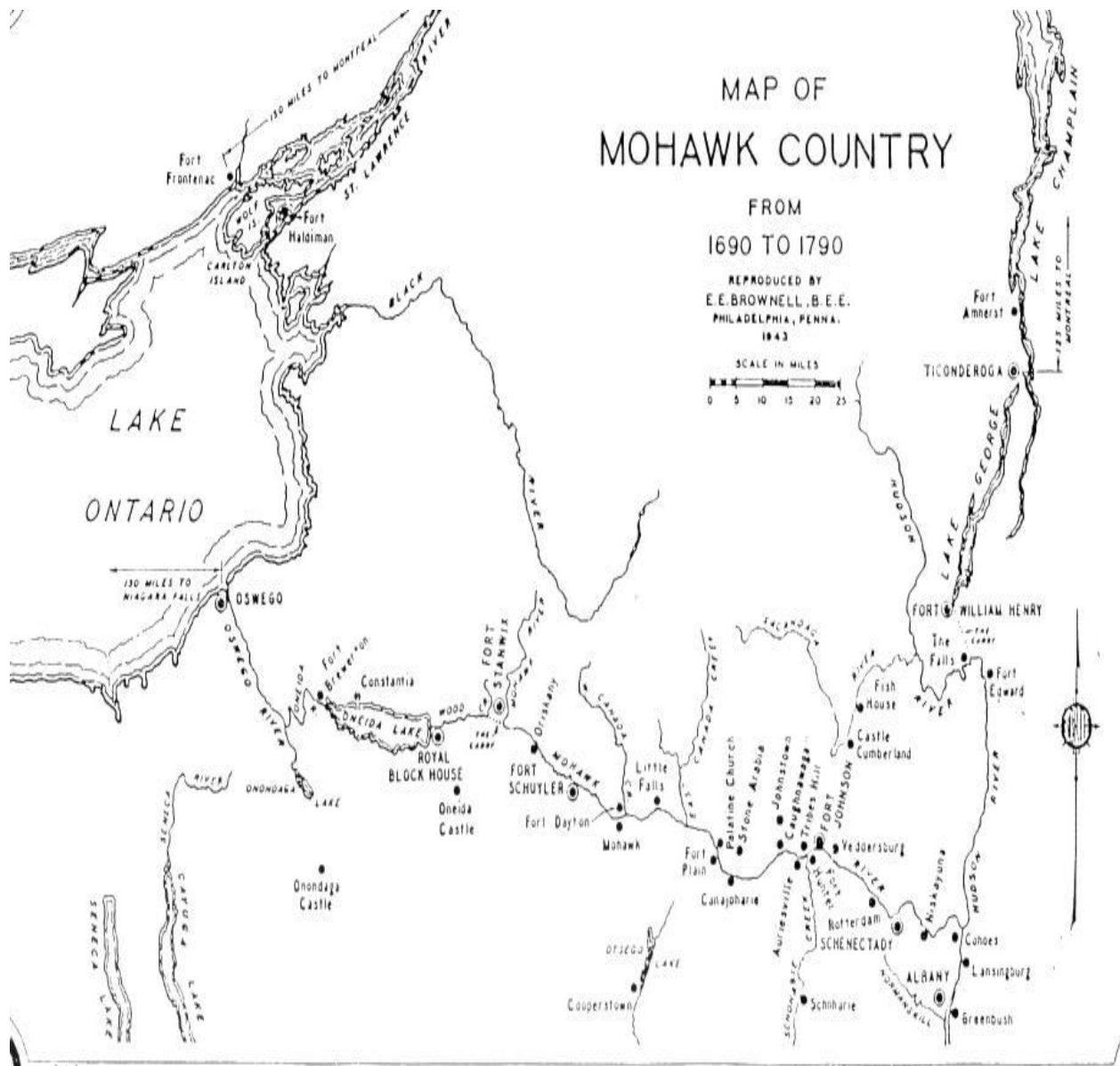
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² Paul M. Keesler, *Mohawk: Discovering the Valley of the Crystals* (Utica, New York: North Country Books, 2008). <http://www.mpaulkeeslerbooks.com/Chap1GreatValley.htm> (accessed on December 14, 2010).



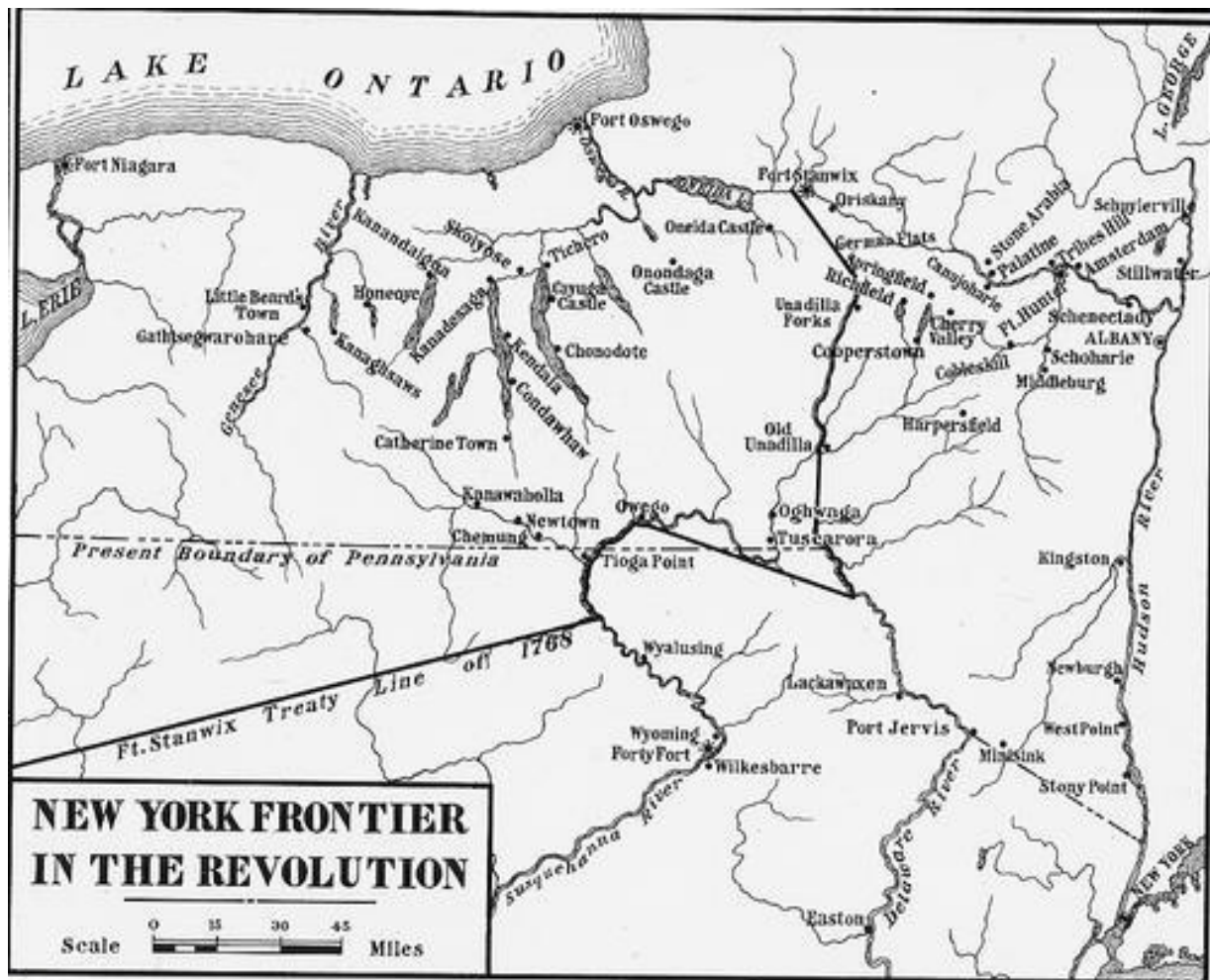
Terrain Map (edited from previous) highlighting the Mohawk Valley and its landforms³

³ Paul M. Keesler, *Mohawk: Discovering the Valley of the Crystals* (Utica, New York: North Country Books, 2008). <http://www.mpaulkeeslerbooks.com/Chap1GreatValley.htm> (accessed on December 14, 2010).



Map of major towns and forts in the Mohawk Valley between 1690 and 1790⁴

⁴ E. E. Brownell, *Map of Mohawk Country from 1690 to 1790*, www.googleimages.com (accessed January 17, 2011).



The New York Frontier during the American Revolution 1775-1783⁵

⁵ F.W. Halsey, "Map of the New York Frontier in the Revolution." in New York State Archives, New York (State) Department of Education, Division of Visual Instruction, Instructional glass lantern slides, ca. 1856-1939. Series A3045-78, No. 730. <http://iarchives.nysed.gov/PubImageWeb/viewImageData.jsp?id=1834> (accessed on December 14, 2010).

Introduction

The Mohawk Valley, the only natural east-west water thoroughfare through the Appalachian Plateau—stretching from Georgia to Maine—was an area of immense strategic importance during the Revolutionary War.¹ The strategic location of the Mohawk River led to extraordinary efforts to defend it throughout the war. The Albany and Tryon County Militias, New York Levies, Massachusetts Levies and various Continental Army units combined to help protect the settlements and farmlands of Tryon County from the British and their Loyalist and Indian allies. One key area of this defense was the construction of new forts, such as Fort Dayton, and the reconstruction of old forts left in the Mohawk Valley after the French and Indian War, including Fort Stanwix.² These efforts saw success during 1777 when the Siege of Fort Stanwix, led by Lt. Col. Barry St. Leger, failed. This led to the faulty mindset of Continental and New York State officials that as long as Fort Stanwix held, the British could not capture the Mohawk Valley and march to Albany. This mindset proved false through Fort Stanwix's inability to stop the Indian and Loyalist raids of 1780.

Fort Stanwix guarded the strategically important Oneida Carrying Place, the portage between Oneida Lake and the head of navigation on the Mohawk River. The fort's mission was to block any invasion force that entered the Mohawk Valley, especially from the west. The British General John Stanwix originally built the fort in 1758. The fort fell into disrepair after the conclusion of the French and Indian War. The Continental Congress decided in 1776 to restore

¹ M. Paul Keesler, *Mohawk: Discovering the Valley of the Crystals* (Utica, New York: North Country Books, 2008), 1.

² Fort Stanwix was named for the British General John Stanwix, who built the fort in 1758. During the French and Indian War, Fort Stanwix served as a base from which the successful attacks on Fort Frontenac in 1758, and Fort Niagara in 1759, were launched. Stanwix also was the setting for the Fort Stanwix Treaty of 1768, between the British and the Indians. Fort Stanwix was renamed Fort Schuyler by the Americans in 1776. I will use the name Fort Stanwix unless a cited source does otherwise.

Fort Stanwix on the recommendation of Rev. Samuel Kirkland³ and the Oneida Sachems.⁴ This resulted in Colonel Elias Dayton's Third New Jersey Regiment (3NJ) receiving orders to begin reconstruction of the fort in the summer of 1776. While on a reconnaissance of the site, Captain Joseph Bloomfield of the 3NJ recorded the following in his journal. "Took a View of the Ruins of this Once strong and beautiful Fort . . . The Examination of this fortification gave me a better Idea of the strength and Importance of a Fort than anything I ever before saw or Read."⁵ After the summer of 1776, many officials believed the Oneidas statements that the Mohawk Valley could be defended by a refortified Fort Stanwix.⁶

Colonel Peter Gansevoort's Third New York Regiment (3NY), successfully withstood the British siege of Fort Stanwix in August 1777, despite the fort's reconstruction being unfinished. British Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger's two thousand men planned to advance down the Mohawk Valley to Albany, but this plan was stopped and turned back at Stanwix. This occurred after the Battle of Oriskany and sortie of Lt. Col. Marinus Willett on August 6 that demoralized the Indians who took heavy casualties in both men and material. This, followed by Maj. Gen. Benedict Arnold's August 21 ruse, led to the end of the siege as the next day St. Leger's army quickly retreated in a near panic. The defeat of St. Leger's expedition in August 1777 proved to be the only instance where Fort Stanwix worked as planned in its defensive role during the American Revolution.

³ Reverend Samuel Kirkland was a Congregationalist missionary to the Oneida Tribe. He was originally from Connecticut, and while training to be a missionary to the Indians was a classmate of Joseph Brant. Kirkland also served as an American Indian agent and a Continental Army Chaplain during the Revolutionary War.

⁴ Gavin K. Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley: The St. Leger Expedition of 1777* (Toronto: The Dundurn Group, 2002), 33-36.

⁵ Joseph Bloomfield, "Friday, June 28, 1776," in *Citizen Soldier: The Revolutionary War Journal of Joseph Bloomfield* eds. Mark E. Lender and James Kirby Martin (Newark, New Jersey: New Jersey Historical Society, 1982), 65.

⁶ Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley*, 33-36.

In 1778, the Loyalist and Indian raids on the Mohawk Valley began early as outlying settlements were destroyed in March and April. There were several large scale raids in 1778. Brant destroyed Cobus Kill⁷ in May, Springfield and Andrew's Town⁸ in July, and German Flats in September. These devastating raids continued throughout the year, but the garrison of Fort Stanwix was unable to assist the residents due to its distance from the settlements and the unpredictability of the raiding parties. The Cherry Valley Massacre of November 11, 1778, led by Loyalist Captain Walter Butler, devastated the town. On November 6, five days prior to this attack, Colonel Ichabod Alden of the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment received a dispatch from Fort Stanwix warning of the coming raid.⁹ Alden minimized the importance of this intelligence, and this decision led to the destruction of Cherry Valley.

In retaliation for the previous years' raids, Gen. Washington decided in 1779 to send four thousand Continentals under Maj. Gen. John Sullivan and Brig. Gen. James Clinton to destroy the Iroquois' villages. Prior to this campaign, Colonel Goose Van Schaick of the First New York Regiment (1NY) left Fort Stanwix in April 1779 with 558 men to destroy the Onondaga villages. Van Schaick accomplished this mission without losing a man. He also captured several Onondagas while removing a threat from the rear of the Sullivan campaign. The Clinton-Sullivan Campaign of August and September 1779 was a success and a failure. It destroyed more than 40 towns with crops and orchards but did not kill or capture many Indians. Major Jeremiah Fogg stated after the end of the campaign "The nests are destroyed, but the birds are still on the

⁷ Cobus Kill is modern Cobleskill, New York.

⁸ Andrew's Town was also called Andrustown. After Brant's raid in July 1778 this settlement ceased to exist and unlike most destroyed settlements, was never rebuilt.

⁹ Colonel Peter Gansevoort to Colonel Ichabod Alden, November 6, 1778, in Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 185-186.

wing.”¹⁰ The destruction of the Iroquois villages in 1779 had the opposite effect as planned. One goal was to force them into neutrality but the campaign instead drove them deeper into alliance with the British.¹¹

In 1780, the Loyalist and Indian raids on the Mohawk and Schoharie valleys began early with small raids that destroyed abandoned settlements. Sir John Johnson and Joseph Brant struck in May, August, and October 1780. All of these attacks entered the frontiers from different directions with near impunity. Sir John Johnson’s May raid on Caughnawaga descended on the Mohawk Valley from the north, thus avoiding Stanwix. Joseph Brant’s July-August raid on the Oneidas and the Canajoharie District advanced from the south and west. In the October raid led by Johnson, the loyalist and Indian force marched south and east from Fort Oswego to the Upper Fort on the Schoharie. Johnson did this deliberately in order to avoid detection. Despite Johnson’s precautions, Fort Stanwix knew of his approach to the Schoharie. This raid devastated the agricultural output of Tryon County, preventing its use by the Continental Army.

The New York Regiments disliked the duty of serving at Fort Stanwix. There were multiple reasons for this including boredom, lack of provisions, and the danger from Indian attacks outside of the fort. The distance of Fort Stanwix from the Continental supply depots at Albany, Fishkill, and West Point, helped make the fort difficult to keep properly supplied. Washington honored requests to supply the fort at the expense of provisions for his own army, at times sending all the food he had on hand. On May 5, 1781, Washington wrote, “Alarmed at the critical situation of the Garrison of Fort Schuyler, . . .”¹² due to the continued deficiencies in

¹⁰ Major Jeremiah Fogg, “September 30, 1779,” in Frederick Cook, *Journals of the Military Expedition of Major General John Sullivan Against the Six Nations of Indians in 1779 with Records of Centennial Celebrations* (Auburn, New York: Knapp, Peck & Thomson Printers, 1887), 132 .

¹¹ Gavin K. Watt, *The Burning of the Valleys: Daring Raids from Canada Against the New York Frontier in the Fall of 1780* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 60-66.

¹² General George Washington to Brigadier General James Clinton, May 5, 1781, in John C. Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources*, vol. 22 (Washington D.C.: Government

provisions at the post, “ordered . . . 50 Barrels of Meat and the same quantity of flour, to be . . . thrown into that Garrison, but the Commissary reports there are but 34 Bbs of Meat in store. I have directed this number to be sent. . .”¹³ He went on to order Brig. Gen. James Clinton to make sure these supplies went directly to Fort Stanwix due to the army’s not knowing “. . . from whence the supplies of tomorrow are to be derived, no inferior object could have justified the Measure of stripping this Army of its last Mouthful. . .”¹⁴ By 1780 Fort Stanwix proved to be a drain on both provisions and manpower from the Continental Army.

Several authors have examined the Continental Army’s supply problems and the logistical, financial, and political issues leading to the shortages of provisions throughout the American Revolution. Authors such as Erna Risch,¹⁵ E. Wayne Carp,¹⁶ John Shy,¹⁷ and James A. Huston¹⁸ have discussed the reasons for and the effects of the supply problems in the Continental Army. These authors all give excellent information on the development of the Continental Army Staff Departments and the men who worked tirelessly to keep the army supplied. Although these authors did not examine the effects of the army-wide supply difficulties on Fort Stanwix, these works offer context to the difficulties faced by the army in supplying Stanwix.

Erna Risch in *Supplying Washington’s Army* (1981) describes how the army under Gen. Washington received its supplies in the field. Risch examines the Quartermaster’s, Commissary,

Printing Office, 1931-1944), 35-36. <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=27274177&g= Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+22:+To+BRIGADIER+GENERAL+JAMES+CLINTON&query=Fort+Schuyler&d=gw220046>

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Erna Risch, *Supplying Washington’s Army* (Washington, D. C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1981).

¹⁶ E. Wayne Carp, *To Starve the Army at Pleasure: Continental Army Administration and American Political Culture 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

¹⁷ John Shy, “Logistical Crisis and the American Revolution: A Hypothesis,” in *Feeding Mars: Logistics in Modern Warfare from the Middle Ages to the Present* Edited by John A. Lynn (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1993).

¹⁸ James A. Huston, *Logistics of Liberty: American Services of Supply in the Revolutionary War and After* (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1991).

Clothing, Ordinance, and Hospital Departments. She details the supply programs initiated by Congress throughout the war and their overall effectiveness in feeding the army. Risch “seeks to provide answers as to how the main Continental army, the army directly under General George Washington’s control, was maintained in the field for eight years.”¹⁹ Her examination of these issues, despite only discussing the army immediately under the command of Gen. Washington, highlights the difficulties in keeping the Continental army properly supplied.

Risch examines the development of the Quartermaster and Commissary Departments and the difficulties they faced in service to the army. Some major problems were poor finances, corruption, and a lack of reliable transportation due to deficiencies in teams, wagons, and drivers. The states’ agricultural abilities produced more than enough food, but most of the time did not have the means or the governmental power to deliver it.²⁰ This led to Congress’ complete overhaul of the Commissary Department through the 1780 Select Supply System.²¹ This failed due to the states’ inability to fill the supply quotas levied by Congress. While Risch does not mention Fort Stanwix’s constant drain on Washington’s provisions in her writing, this work is important due to its description of the supply problems faced by the army of Gen. George Washington.

E. Wayne Carp, in *To Starve the Army at Pleasure: Continental Army Administration and American Political Culture, 1775-1783*, (1984) discusses the effect of the local, state, and national political culture on the efforts to gather the necessary supplies for the Continental Army. Carp describes the political issues faced in supplying the army due to state and local backlash against the centralized political power necessary for the Continental Congress to properly

¹⁹ Erna Risch, *Supplying Washington’s Army*, 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

²¹ This program instituted by the Continental Congress in 1780 was known as the Select Supply System. Another title used for this program was the Specific Supply System. Unless a source does otherwise, I will refer to this program as the Select Supply System.

provision the army.²² Carp explores how early American political culture shaped Americans' perception of the army and how this affected the procurement of army supplies. He details the efforts of the Continental Congress to reform the army supply departments between 1777 and 1781, especially the Select Supply System of 1780.

Carp explores the severe difficulties faced not only by the army administration, but also the local, state, and national governments in providing the necessary supplies for the army. He adds an interesting viewpoint to the discussion of these difficulties, namely that the economic, logistical, and personnel issues that led to the supply problems originated in early American political culture. These issues developed due to Americans' fear of a powerful standing army and centralized government. He examines how these issues worsened the supply problems in the Continental army, especially late in the war. Carp's discussion of American political culture and its influence on the Continental Army's supply issues illustrates the background of local and state political issues that worsened the problems faced in resupplying Fort Stanwix with adequate provisions.

In "Logistical Crisis and the American Revolution: A Hypothesis," (1993) John Shy discusses the supply problems through the light of near complete lack of efficient transportation to bring supplies to the army. He explains that there was no real shortage of supplies, provisions, or men of military age in America during the war. Shy argues that throughout the war there was a major shortage in transportation and the skilled manpower necessary to keep the transportation system running.²³ One reason he gave was the shortage of safe roadways. This was due to the best roadways being along waterways, or near coastal areas, where the supply trains could be

²² E. Wayne Carp, *To Starve the Army at Pleasure*, 14-15.

²³ John Shy, "Logistical Crisis and the American Revolution: A Hypothesis," in *Feeding Mars*, 163.

harassed by British or loyalist raiding parties. The shipping and transportation problems helped to keep the Continental Army constantly short on provisions and forage.

He explores Congress' formation of the Specific Supply System in 1780, under which the states were to provide for their own regiments, and any other Continental troops based in their state. This led to the army's use of an impressment policy to acquire supplies and transportation from local farmers for payment promised at a future date. Impressment was an unpopular policy among the vast majority of army officers and the public and led many farmers to hide their crops and livestock. Shy argues that despite the many logistical mistakes that occurred during the war, no one person or group of people was entirely to blame for the army's supply problems. He asserts that the supply problems in America were most likely inevitable due to the deficiencies in transportation and skilled manpower. This lack of safe transportation, forage, and skilled workmen severely affected the resupply of Fort Stanwix. While most supplies could be loaded on bateaux and sent up the Mohawk River to Stanwix, a large amount of provisions still went west on the "King's Highway."

In *Logistics of Liberty: American Services of Supply in the Revolutionary War and After* (1991) James A. Huston discusses the logistical problems the nation faced in keeping the Continental Army supplied, especially while on campaign. He details the efforts of the Continental Congress and Army to procure arms, ammunition, clothing, and food. Congress accomplished this objective through the use of imports, wartime captures, and domestic production. He examines the nation's financial struggles and how these led to the initiation of the Specific Supply System in 1780. This system failed for many reasons, one being the inability and/or unwillingness of the states to raise the taxes and quotas necessary to keep the army

supplied.²⁴ These problems in gathering supplies grew worse when combined with the lack of safe and efficient transportation to carry them to the army.

Huston states the effects of the lack of finances to purchase the supplies and transportation to bring them to the army. He argues that the Continental Army's nearly total reliance on land transport instead of water transportation occurred due to the British Navy's control of the sea and many navigable waterways. Although Huston does not examine the effects of the nation's logistical and transportation problems on the efforts to keep Fort Stanwix supplied, these two problems severely affected the tenability of the fort especially after the 1780 raids.

The above authors discuss the multi-faceted supply problems faced by the Continental Army throughout the American Revolution. A common theme that all of these writers examine is the Select Supply System of 1780. They detail the collapse of this system through the states' inability to send sufficient supplies to the army. Their works agree that the army's supply problem stemmed from the lack of safe and reliable transportation, the national financial problems, and the underlying American political culture. Although all of these authors agree that these factors played a role in the collapse of the supply system, each one emphasizes a specific factor as the key issue. Erna Risch believes that the army's supply and transportation problems grew out of the financial problems that occurred due to the worthless Continental paper currency. John Shy asserts that the financial problems stemmed from the lack of safe and reliable transportation, skilled laborers, and drivers for the available transports. While E. Wayne Carp argues that the financial and transportation issues that led to the supply breakdown branched out of the American political culture, where it seemed at times that Americans would rather lose the war than give Congress the necessary power to win the war.

²⁴ James A. Huston, *Logistics of Liberty*, 139.

The above mentioned reasons for the Continental Army's supply problems limited the army's and New York's ability to keep Fort Stanwix properly provisioned. The transportation, economic, and political issues hamstrung the efforts to supply Fort Stanwix throughout the war. Despite this, the fort remained a somewhat viable position due to its strategic location for gathering intelligence and its role in keeping U.S.-Oneida relations on good footing. However, a combination of Congress' Select Supply System and devastating Indian and Loyalist raids in 1780 ensured that Stanwix became untenable.

Through the formation of the Select Supply System in 1780, the Continental Congress levied state quotas for soldiers, supplies, and money for the army. This led to most (Georgia did not receive a quota) of the states' inability to fulfill their supply quotas. In New York, the element that ensured its failure was the 1780 Loyalist and Indian Raids on the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys. These major raids occurred in May, August, and October and completely destroyed that year's grain harvests from Tryon County. This led to New York's inability to fill its supply quotas for the army and the state's forts, including Fort Stanwix.

Several authors have discussed the American Revolution in the Mohawk Valley. The writings on this subject can be divided into two main periods: the 1830s through 1910s and after 1970. The earlier authors give excellent discussions on the entirety of the Revolutionary War in the Mohawk Valley, with lengthy sections on the 1780 raids. The more recent works tend to cover specialized topics that focus on the specific campaigns. These authors all describe the major events that occurred at Fort Stanwix, yet do not show the untenable situation of the fort after the 1780 raids. The impotence of Stanwix to thwart these invasions demonstrated that the garrison could not adequately defend the Mohawk Valley.

Several historians, between the mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, detailed the events that occurred in the Mohawk Valley and the supply and operational issues faced by the garrisons of Fort Stanwix. These early authors relied upon interviews of surviving veterans, veterans' relatives, and archived collections of documents. William W. Campbell, in *Annals of Tryon County* (1831),²⁵ examined the events that occurred in Tryon County and how these affected the local residents who fought to defend their homes and families. Campbell discussed the service of Fort Stanwix and how the resupply problems affected the fort's effectiveness throughout the war. He described Stanwix's isolated position, and how that contributed to its unsuccessful defense of the Mohawk Valley. William Leete Stone wrote a two volume work that covered the history of the Mohawk Valley between 1742 and 1815. His first volume, *Life of Joseph Brant* (1838),²⁶ covered the years between 1742 and 1779, while his second, *Border Wars* (1843),²⁷ detailed the years from 1779 through 1815. He examined the chronic deficiencies of provisions due to the difficulties faced in keeping Fort Stanwix supplied.

F. W. Beers, in *History of Montgomery and Fulton Counties, NY* (1878),²⁸ highlighted the history of the two counties, from the early Indian villages prior to European settlement, through the end of the U. S. Civil War in 1865. In a large section of his book, Beers examined the American Revolution in the Mohawk Valley. He detailed the major problems faced in supplying all of the forts along the Mohawk Valley, with Fort Stanwix being the most difficult due to its

²⁵ William W. Campbell, *Annals of Tryon County: Or, the Border Warfare of New York During the Revolution* (New York: J & Harper, 1831).

²⁶ William Leete Stone, *Life of Joseph Brant-Thayendanega: Including the Border Wars of the American Revolution and Sketches of the Indian Campaigns of Generals Harmar, St. Clair, and Wayne* vol. 1 (New York: George Dearborn and Co., 1838).

²⁷ William Leete Stone, *Border Wars of the American Revolution* vol. 2 (New York: A. L. Fowle, 1900) (originally published in 1843).

²⁸ F. W. Beers & Co., *History of Montgomery and Fulton Counties, N.Y.: With Illustrations Descriptive of Scenery, Private Residences, Public Buildings, Fine Blocks, and Important Manufactories, from Original Sketches by Artists of the Highest Ability; and Portraits of Old Pioneers and Prominent Residents* (New York: George MacNamara Printer, 1878).

distance from the settlements. Nelson Greene, in *The Story of Old Fort Plain and the Middle Mohawk Valley* (1915),²⁹ discussed the history of the Mohawk Valley between the years 1609 and 1914. He divided the history of the Mohawk Valley into four parts, of which the Revolutionary Period, lasting from 1772-1783, is the second. Greene extensively detailed the American Revolution in the Mohawk Valley and the effect of the fighting on the local populace. He recorded the inability of Fort Stanwix to completely defend the frontier and the difficulty of keeping the fort in provisions because of the distance and the risk of enemy attack. He also described the necessity to abandon Fort Stanwix in May of 1781, due to the damage that resulted from a flood and a fire.

These early historical writings on the American Revolution in the Mohawk Valley are important to the study of how Fort Stanwix became a liability to the Continental Army. These authors all mention the problems faced in keeping the fort supplied. They described the distance and the threat of enemy attack as reasons for the problems in keeping the fort provisioned. While these writers all mention the supply issues and the successful defense against Lt. Col. Barry St. Leger's siege in 1777, with the exception of Campbell, they do not mention the failure of Fort Stanwix to properly defend the Mohawk Valley from future Indian and Loyalist raids.

The historical works written since the 1970s by authors such as Barbara Graymont,³⁰ Gavin K. Watt,³¹ Ken D. Johnson,³⁴ and William R. Nester³⁵ tend to focus more on specific

²⁹ Nelson Greene, *The Story of Old Fort Plain and the Middle Mohawk Valley* (Fort Plain, New York: O'Connor Brothers, 1915).

³⁰ Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1972).

³¹ Gavin K. Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley: The St. Leger Expedition of 1777* (Toronto: The Dundurn Group, 2002).

³² Gavin K. Watt, *The Burning of the Valleys: Daring Raids from Canada Against the New York Frontier in the Fall of 1780* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997).

³³ Gavin K. Watt, *A Dirty, Trifling, Piece of Business, Volume 1: The Revolutionary War as Waged from Canada in 1781* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009).

people groups, campaigns, and places rather than on the Revolution in the Mohawk Valley as a whole. The modern writers all discuss the events involving Fort Stanwix. Despite this, these works do not consistently show how Stanwix became untenable after the 1780 raids on the Schoharie and Mohawk Valleys.

Barbara Graymont, in *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (1972),³⁶ examines the role of the Iroquois Confederacy in the war. During the war, the British received the aid of the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, and Mohawk Tribes. The majority of the Oneida and Tuscarora allied with the Patriots, causing an irrevocable split in the Iroquois Confederacy. The Iroquois participated in most, if not all of the battles and raids that devastated the New York frontiers between 1777 and 1782. Graymont describes how the Iroquois' actions affected Fort Stanwix during the war. She does this through her discussions of the 1777 siege, the always present Indian raiding parties, and Joseph Brant's July 1780 attack on the Oneida villages. Graymont details how the long terms of service of the New York regiments at Fort Stanwix, without facing actual large scale combat, affected the discipline and morale of the men in garrison at the fort.³⁷

Gavin K. Watt, in *The Burning of the Valleys* (1997),³⁸ examines the major raids on the New York frontiers in 1780. These raids were led by Sir John Johnson and Joseph Brant against the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys. Watt explores the attempts to stop the raids by the New York and Massachusetts Levies and the local militias. These raids struck the frontier in May, July, August, and October after the harvest, and devastated agricultural production. Watt describes the role of Fort Stanwix in the October raid, a role primarily limited to alerting Albany

³⁴ Ken D. Johnson, *The Bloodied Mohawk: The American Revolution in the Words of Fort Plank's Defenders and Other Mohawk Valley Partisans* (Rockland, Maine: Picton Press, 2000).

³⁵ William R. Nester, *The Frontier War for American Independence* (Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 2004).

³⁶ Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 174-177.

³⁸ Watt, *The Burning of the Valleys*.

to the incoming raid. The fort later sent a party to try and destroy Johnson's boats to halt his retreat. He also discusses the shortages of provisions at Fort Stanwix both prior to, and after the 1780 raids.

Watt wrote two other books that discuss Fort Stanwix's defense of the Mohawk Valley. In *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley* (2002),³⁹ he details the events that occurred in the Mohawk Valley between 1775 and 1777. He focuses on the restoration of Fort Stanwix in 1776-1777 and its role in the defense of the frontier. He examines the 1777 campaign of British Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger that culminated in his failed August siege of Fort Stanwix. By successfully thwarting St. Leger's campaign to march down the Mohawk Valley to Albany and assist Lieutenant General John Burgoyne's army, Fort Stanwix accomplished its only true defensive success during the American Revolution. Watt, in *A Dirty, Trifling, Piece of Business* (2009),⁴⁰ discusses the events that occurred in the Mohawk Valley during 1781. In this, he examines the situation at Fort Stanwix during the closing months of its service from January through June 1781. He details the major personnel issues within the garrison prior to the fort's destruction through a flood and fire in mid-May. He also explores the moving of the fort's garrison to Fort Herkimer in May and June 1781.

Ken D. Johnson, in *The Bloodied Mohawk* (2000),⁴¹ examines the history and disputed location of Fort Plank in the Mohawk Valley. He discusses the May, August, and October 1780 raids led by Sir John Johnson and Brant. Johnson details the ruse utilized by Brant that forced the militia of the Canajoharie District to guard a supply train to Fort Stanwix. He describes the October raid of Sir John Johnson that destroyed the Schoharie and Mohawk Valley settlements including Stone Arabia. He also examines the battles of Stone Arabia and Klock's Field in which

³⁹ Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley*.

⁴⁰ Watt, *A Dirty, Trifling, Piece of Business*.

⁴¹ Ken D. Johnson, *The Bloodied Mohawk*.

the Americans tried to stop the raiders. Johnson discussed the role played by Fort Plank throughout the Revolutionary War as a base for both the Tryon County Militia, and various Continental Army regiments. Johnson assesses the service of several Continental units that served in Fort Stanwix, as many garrisoned Fort Plank either prior to or after their duty at Stanwix. He describes the supply difficulties of 1780, and Fort Plank's service as a Continental Army supply depot. During which, the fort dealt with the supplies for Fort Stanwix as the convoys passed through while en route to Stanwix from Albany.

William R. Nester, in *The Frontier War for American Independence* (2004),⁴² examines the Revolutionary Era on the American frontier between 1763 and 1783. Nester writes on the frontier war's importance to the outcome of the Revolution, a subject not extensively discussed in other works on the American Revolution.⁴³ He describes the results of the campaigns waged by the British and their Loyalist and Indian allies against the Mohawk Valley in 1777, 1778, and 1780-82. He discusses the American campaign in 1779 against the Iroquois nations in western New York as well. Nester argues that the repulse of British Brigadier General⁴⁴ Barry St. Leger's 1777 expedition at Fort Stanwix and Oriskany was one of the three major frontier events which helped the Americans win the war.⁴⁵ He explores Johnson's May and October raids, as well as Brant's incursion of late July and early August 1780, describing the destruction these attacks unleashed on the Mohawk Valley. He details Fort Stanwix's role in guarding the Mohawk Valley, exploring the fort's failure to achieve this prior to its abandonment in 1781. He

⁴² William R. Nester, *The Frontier War for American Independence*.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁴ During the 1777 campaign, British Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger received official permission to serve as acting Brigadier General due to the large size of the force he commanded. Despite this, St. Leger officially remained a Lt. Col. throughout this campaign. Unless a cited source states otherwise, I will refer to St. Leger by his official rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

⁴⁵ Nester, *The Frontier War for American Independence*, 2.

concludes that with the abandonment of Fort Stanwix the New York frontier receded to Fort Herkimer, and that frontier posts in general were unable to thwart enemy raids.⁴⁶

The post-1970 works written on the American Revolution in the Mohawk Valley help to highlight the difficult supply and manpower situation at Fort Stanwix throughout the war. These authors utilized the available primary sources, most of which are in county, state, national, or university archive collections. While the vast majority of these works were written on subjects other than the untenability of Fort Stanwix, they all discussed the hazards and problems faced at the position. While these works examine the severe supply and manpower issues at Fort Stanwix, none make the connection between these problems and the fort's becoming an overall liability to the Continental Army.

Fort Stanwix's inability to properly defend the New York Frontiers stemmed from the fort's isolation from the settlements. This isolation made it dangerous for the men to leave the fort in small groups. These problems combined to make garrison duty at Fort Stanwix a task hated by the men serving there. These issues also led to several attempted mutinies in the ranks of the 1NY at Stanwix in 1779 and 1780. In the fall of 1780, Colonel William Malcom⁴⁷ asked permission to move the fort's garrison 30 miles east to Fort Herkimer. Both Washington and New York State officials denied Malcom's request to abandon Fort Stanwix due to the belief that the fort needed to be manned in order to keep the Mohawk Valley protected.

The resolution of this issue came about in May 1781 when two-thirds of Fort Stanwix's sod walls washed away in torrential rains and a suspicious fire destroyed the barracks. These disasters combined to force the post's evacuation in May and June of 1781. In the summer and fall of 1781, Loyalist and Indian forces continued to attack Tryon County from all directions,

⁴⁶ Nester, *The Frontier War for American Independence*, 304.

⁴⁷ Colonel William Malcom served as Commander of the Northern Department during the fall of 1780.

when they easily could have marched along the banks of the Mohawk River. This illustrated the post-1777 British change in strategy that the Continental Army and New York State repeatedly missed. Throughout the period of 1777-1781, the Loyalists and Indians proved time and time again, especially during the 1780 raids, that they could enter the area with impunity from any direction they pleased, without passing Fort Stanwix. The inability to properly defend the valleys from the 1780 raids, coupled with the difficulties in maintaining the post, demonstrated how Fort Stanwix became a liability to the Continental Army.

Chapter One: Fort Stanwix's Early Success and the Formation of a Failed Mindset

In 1776 the Oneida Indians pointed out to the Continental Congress that a British invasion of the Mohawk Valley could be stopped by a refortified Fort Stanwix.⁴⁸ The reconstruction of the post led to the formation of a faulty mindset among the New York State government and many Continental Army officers that Fort Stanwix was the key to the defense of the Mohawk Valley. Stanwix, positioned to block an invasion from the west down the Mohawk River, successfully defended Tryon County against the expedition of British Lt. Col. Barry St. Leger in August 1777. This success only served to strengthen the thinking of Stanwix as the key to the defense of the frontier. Although the British strategy changed in 1778 from attempting to conquer Tryon County, to the destruction of the valley's agricultural output through Loyalist and Indian raiding parties, the Americans continued to believe that holding Fort Stanwix meant American control of the frontier. The formation of this faulty strategy in 1776 and 1777, in light of the changes in the British plans in 1778, set the foundation for major supply, manpower, and isolation issues faced by soldiers at Fort Stanwix until its abandonment in 1781.

Throughout 1775 and early 1776 there were severe tensions along the Mohawk Valley between the local Patriots and Loyalists. In June 1775, many prominent loyalists fled Tryon County including Colonel Guy Johnson, with 250 employees, friends and family.⁴⁹ After leaving the valley, Col. Johnson⁵⁰ and Col. Daniel Claus held conferences with the Indians at Fort Oswego and Montreal in 1775 to encourage them to go on the warpath for the crown. Sir John

⁴⁸ The Oneida tribe sent this request to Congress in the form of a letter written by their missionary Reverend Samuel Kirkland.

⁴⁹ Gavin K. Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley*, 21-23.

⁵⁰ Colonel Guy Johnson replaced his uncle and father-in-law, Sir William Johnson, as the Superintendent of Indian Affairs after Sir William's death in 1774.

Johnson⁵¹ also fled from the Mohawk Valley in May 1776 after hearing that a large force of Continentals and militia was en route to arrest him and his associates.⁵² Both Sir John and Col. Guy Johnson began planning Loyalist expeditions to retake the Mohawk Valley.

After receiving the Oneidas' request to restore Fort Stanwix, the Continental Congress ordered the Third New Jersey Regiment (3NJ) to rebuild the fort. At this time, the 3NJ with elements of the Fourth New York Regiment (4NY), and the Tryon County Militia, were constructing Fort Dayton at German Flats.⁵³ On July 11, 1776, Captain Joseph Bloomfield described his regiment's preparations to march to Fort Stanwix.⁵⁴ He recorded the arrival of "a Company of Artillery this Evening so far on their way to Fort Stanwix" and that "all our Regiment excepting my Company are ordered to get in Readiness to March tomorrow."⁵⁵ The 3NJ garrisoned Fort Stanwix until October when they received orders to march to Fort Ticonderoga. When the 3NJ left Stanwix, the post was thought to be defensible against small arms and light artillery.

In mid-August 1776, Maj. Gen. Philip Schuyler convened a conference with the Indians at German Flats. The goal of this meeting, attended by more than two thousand natives, was to keep the Iroquois neutral in the American Revolution. This meeting was temporarily successful, although the roots of future problems did appear as there was significant mistrust between the two groups. One of these issues was that the Iroquois, except for the Oneida who invited them, considered the Continentals at Fort Stanwix to be trespassing on Indian Territory.⁵⁶ Throughout

⁵¹ Sir John Johnson, also a Colonel, was the eldest legitimate son and the heir of Sir William Johnson.

⁵² Mary Beacock Fryer, *King's Men: The Soldier Founders of Ontario* (Toronto: Dundurn Press Limited, 1980), 69-72.

⁵³ Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley*, 33-36.

⁵⁴ Joseph Bloomfield, "July 11, 1776 Journal Entry," in *Citizen Soldier*, 68.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ William R. Nester, *The Frontier War of American Independence*, 104-105.

the summer and fall of 1776, rumors of a Loyalist and Indian invasion of the Mohawk Valley ran rampant, keeping Fort Stanwix and the frontier settlements on high alert. Thomas Spencer wrote

News from Onondaga that there are seven hundred Indians and whites at Oswegatchie that will be at Oswego this day...they are to come first to Stone Arabia and then go down...and that there are particular parties designed to take Major Fonda and Colonel Herkimer...They make five roads as they come through the woods. NB. The party designed for Oswego are commanded by Walter Butler. I am at a loss whether they are yet arrived at Oswego or not. Great numbers will soon arrive after the seven hundred at Oswego.⁵⁷

The British and their allies were not the only ones to effectively use rumors in order to confuse the enemy. Gen. Schuyler spread a rumor through the Iroquois that, according to the British Captain Richard Lernoult, led to the Indians' claiming that "six thousand rebels were to take post at Oswego."⁵⁸ Lernoult described Gen. Schuyler as "very industrious in spreading such reports which alarm the Six Nations greatly."⁵⁹ He also worried that if the Continental Army did capture Fort Oswego, it would either keep the Indians neutral, or they would join with the Americans.⁶⁰

Throughout 1775 and 1776, both of the Johnsons lobbied extensively for an immediate invasion of the Mohawk Valley from Fort Oswego. During this time, Sir John Johnson received permission to raise a Loyalist regiment that he named the King's Royal Regiment of New York⁶¹ or Johnson's Greens. This regiment played a major role in the future events in the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys. Lieutenant General John Burgoyne, after hearing of the expected success of a Mohawk Valley invasion in 1776 from both Johnsons, added it to his plan titled, "Thoughts for

⁵⁷ Thomas Spencer to Colonel Elias Dayton, September 4, 1776, in *American Archives: Fifth Series, Containing a Documentary History of the United States of America, from the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776, to the Definitive Treaty of Peace with Great Britain, September 3, 1783* vol. 2 ed. Peter Force (Washington D.C.: M. St. Clair Clarke and Peter Force, 1837), 247-248.

⁵⁸ Captain Richard Lernoult to Captain-General Guy Carleton, April 28, 1777, in Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley*, 60.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ The King's Royal Regiment of New York was called Johnson's Greens and the Royal Yorkers. Unless called otherwise in a quotation, I will refer to the unit as Johnson's Greens.

conducting the War from the Side of Canada.”⁶² This plan called for a three-pronged invasion of New York, which, if successful, would divide the colonies in two. Burgoyne chose Lt. Col. Barry St. Leger⁶³ to lead the wing that would march from Fort Oswego down the Mohawk Valley to Albany. St. Leger was given 675 soldiers, not counting Indians and Canadians, to man his expedition.⁶⁴ St. Leger’s expedition would begin its trek toward the Mohawk Valley on June 26, 1777, and arrived at Buck Island on July 8.

In April 1777, Schuyler, commander of the Northern Department of the Continental Army in Albany, ordered the Third New York (3NY) under Col. Peter Gansevoort and Lt. Col. Marinus Willett, to finish the restoration of Fort Stanwix into fighting condition and to serve as its garrison. While some of the 3NY arrived in mid April, Gansevoort and much of his regiment arrived on May 3.⁶⁵ By late June Schuyler had received information on the coming invasion. James Deane reported that two Indians, “lately from Canada. . . reported that Sir John Johnson would be at Oswego with a large body of Indians the first of July, where he would be joined by Butler and his party from Niagara, from whence they were to attack Fort Schuyler; and that the regular troops were at the same time to make an attack upon Ticonderoga.”⁶⁶ Schuyler relayed this information to Gansevoort at Fort Stanwix. The 3NY continued working on the fort’s construction despite the great risk of deadly Indian and Loyalist attacks.

On July 3 British Indian Department Captain John Deserontyon, a Mohawk Indian, and fellow Department Captain John Hare led a raiding party of Indians that captured five members

⁶² Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley*, 49.

⁶³ During this campaign, Lt. Col. St. Leger received the rank of acting Brigadier General due to the large size of his force.

⁶⁴ Lord George Germain to Captain-General Guy Carleton, March 26, 1777, in William A. Smy, *The Butler Papers: Documents Relating to Colonel John Butler and His Corps of Rangers, 1711-1777*, vol. BR1775 (Victoria, British Columbia: Not Published, 1994), 26.

⁶⁵ William Colbrath, “April 17, and May 3, 1777, Journal Entries,” in *Days of Siege: A Journal of the Siege of Fort Stanwix in 1777* ed. Larry Lowenthal (New York: Eastern Acorn Press, 1983), 11.

⁶⁶ James Deane to Major General Philip Schuyler, June 25, 1777, in *Papers of the Continental Congress*, Microfilm Group M247, Roll 173:212. <http://www.footnote.com/image/#435682> pages 201-202. (accessed October 7, 2010).

of a Continental work party from Stanwix.⁶⁷ This raid occurred on the orders of Col. Claus of the British Indian Department in order to obtain accurate information on Stanwix and its garrison. He discovered from the prisoners that, “The old Fort which is a regular Square, and garrisoned by upwards of 600 Men, the Repairs far advanced, and the Rebels expecting us, and were well acquainted with our Strength and Rout [sic].”⁶⁸ After receiving this intelligence from Claus, St. Leger “owned that if they intended to defend themselves at that Fort, our Artillery were not sufficient to take it, however he said that he was determined to get the Truth of these Fellows.”⁶⁹ Regardless of these developments, St. Leger decided to stay on course rather than wait for his heavy artillery and the rest of his German troops. This decision stemmed from his assumption that the “Alert,” an advanced force of Indians, Regulars and Loyalists, would quickly capture Fort Stanwix.⁷⁰

St. Leger’s approach toward Fort Stanwix led Schuyler to send word to Brig. Gen. Nicholas Herkimer of the Tryon County Militia, to have his men ready to support Gansevoort at the fort. The morale of the militia was very low after hearing the reports of St. Leger’s advancing force. Herkimer told Schuyler that “whole numbers of men in each district are so far discouraged, that they think it worthless to fight, and will not obey orders for battle, if the country is not in time succored with at least 1,500 Continental troops.”⁷¹ On July 17 the Tryon County Committee of Safety met with the Oneida sachem Thomas Spencer.⁷² Spencer told the committee that Loyalist Col. Butler made a treaty with the Indians at Fort Oswego and urged the

⁶⁷ Colbrath, “July 3, 1777, Journal Entry,” in *Days of Siege*, 16.

⁶⁸ Colonel Daniel Claus to William Knox, British Undersecretary of State for the Northern Department, October 11, 1777, in John F. Luzader, *Saratoga: A Military History of the Decisive Campaign of the American Revolution* (New York: Savas Beatie, 2008), 122.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Gavin K. Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley*, 88-90.

⁷¹ Brigadier General Nicholas Herkimer to Major General Philip Schuyler, July 15, 1777, in Luzader, 126.

⁷² Thomas Spencer was an Oneida chief (or sachem) he was also a blacksmith. He served as a scout watching St. Leger’s force prior to his death in the August 6, 1777 Battle of Oriskany.

county's men to stand and fight against the British and Indians. On July 17, the Tryon County Committee of Safety issued a proclamation signed by Herkimer calling up the militia.

. . . every male person, being in health, from 16 to 60 years of age, in this our county, shall, as in duty bound, repair immediately, with arms and accoutrements, to the place to be appointed in my orders, and will then march to oppose the enemy with vigor, as true patriots, for the just defense of their country.⁷³

The militia knew what was coming and prepared to fight. In late July Herkimer sent a party of militia to Stanwix guarding boats of supplies. The militiamen also felled trees along 20 miles of Wood Creek to prevent St. Leger's supplies and artillery from speedily reaching Fort Stanwix.⁷⁴

St. Leger's expedition left Fort Oswego on July 26 and marched toward Fort Stanwix. He sent patrols ahead of his main force of 30 British Regulars under Lt. Henry Bird, and 200 Indians under Joseph Brant. St. Leger ordered Bird stating "I will have nothing but an investiture made; and in case the enemy observing the discretion and judgment with which it is made, should offer to capitulate, you are to tell them that you are sure I am well disposed to listen to them. . ."⁷⁵ The patrols failed to prevent the blocking of Wood Creek or to reach the fort before Gansevoort's much needed supplies and reinforcements had arrived. On July 29 Gansevoort received word from Thomas Spencer that the British were marching toward Stanwix. The next day, Capt. DeWitt's Company of the 3NY, and Major Ezra Badlam with 150 men of the Ninth Massachusetts Regiment, reinforced the garrison. They told Gansevoort that seven bateaux of supplies were en route, guarded by one hundred men. Gansevoort quickly sent one hundred more men to reinforce the bateaux guards.⁷⁶

⁷³ Tryon County Committee of Safety to Tryon County Militia, July 17, 1777, in Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley*, 100-101.

⁷⁴ Colbrath, "July 26, 1777, Journal Entry," in *Days of Siege*, 18.

⁷⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger to Lieutenant Henry Bird, August 2, 1777, in Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley*, 121-122.

⁷⁶ Colbrath, "July 30, 1777, Journal Entry," in *Days of Siege*, 20-21.

On July 31 the seven supply bateaux arrived at Fort Stanwix just prior to the arrival of Bird's patrol. After the safe arrival of these transports, Gansevoort had 750 men, and six weeks of supplies on hand to resist St. Leger's besieging force. St. Leger and his advance force arrived at Fort Stanwix on August 2 and waited for the rest of his army. The rest of St. Leger's men, including most of the Loyalists, spent several days cutting a road through the woods to get the artillery through. On August 3, St. Leger sent Loyalist Capt. Gilbert Tice with a letter requesting the fort's surrender. The garrison of Fort Stanwix responded by raising an American Flag,⁷⁷ as Gansevoort and his men decided to stand and fight.

On August 3 the Tryon County Militia prepared to march from German Flats to relieve Fort Stanwix. Herkimer's proclamation followed by a letter from Gansevoort describing the killing of two girls and the wounding of a third, outside Fort Stanwix by Indians, helped to rally the militia to fight. Gansevoort wrote

. . . My Countrymen—is the[re] a Man amongst you whose [soul] does not shudder at such Dastardly Bloody business—or is there a pulsanimous heart which requires Arguments to Urge him to Arms – against the King and Parlimant of Brittan, who . . . have declared war against our Poor defenseless Infants. . . . the same bloody Tyrant is employing his Murderers of one kind or another throughout your country – and it is the Vilest Infatuation to suppose your being only [a] looker, will save you from Destruction. . .⁷⁸

After gathering at Fort Dayton, Herkimer and 800 militiamen marched toward Fort Stanwix on August 4.

After arriving at the Oneida village of Oriska on August 5, Herkimer sent three runners to Stanwix to tell Gansevoort that the militia was on its way. The runners were to ask Gansevoort to order a sortie in order to help the militia break through the British lines. The signal to Herkimer that the sortie was underway would be three cannon shots in rapid succession. On August 6,

⁷⁷ Colbrath, "August 3, 1777, Journal Entry, in *ibid.*, 26.

⁷⁸ Col. Peter Gansevoort to Tryon County Committee of Safety, July 29, 1777, in Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley*, 137.

Herkimer met with his officers to plan the attack. He wanted to wait for the signal from the fort before marching, but many of the officers were outspoken in their desire to march immediately. Col. Ebenezer Cox went so far as to call Herkimer a coward and a loyalist, because he wanted to wait for the signal from Gansevoort to advance. A livid Herkimer realized that he had to order the march or he would lose the respect of his men.⁷⁹ The militia marched toward Stanwix, not knowing that many of them would be dead before nightfall.

On August 5 Joseph Brant heard from his sister that the militia marched to relieve Stanwix. Early the next morning Brant, Sir John Johnson, and Col. Butler set up an ambush with about 700 Loyalists, Indians, and Hessians near Oriskany Creek. At the onset of the battle, Herkimer's militia walked into a horseshoe shaped formation of the enemy. The Indians sprang the ambush too soon, as only the first three regiments of the militia, the baggage train, and 60 Oneida Indians had entered the trap. When the first volley was fired, the majority of the Third Regiment of the Tryon County Militia turned and fled.⁸⁰ Some of the Indians chased after the fleeing rearguard killing many, but in doing so prevented the full encirclement of the ambushed militia.

Many senior militia officers were killed or wounded, including Herkimer⁸¹ who had sat on his saddle under a tree calmly directing the battle. After recovering from their initial shock the militia took the lightly held ridge above the road and formed several small defensive positions. The Indians waited for a man to fire then rushed to kill him before he could reload. Seeing this, Herkimer told his men to form two man fire teams, each man providing cover for the other while he reloaded. This change of tactics led to heavy casualties among the Indians and demoralized

⁷⁹ Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley*, 152-154.

⁸⁰ Mike Phifer, *Wolves from Niagara: Butler's Rangers, 1777-1784* (Westminster, Maryland: Heritage Books, 2007), 25-26.

⁸¹ Brigadier General Nicholas Herkimer was shot through his lower left leg in the early stages of the battle. He had his men place him on his saddle under a tree facing the enemy, where he coolly directed his men throughout the battle. Herkimer died on August 16, 1777, from the combination of his infected wound and blood loss from the botched amputation of his wounded leg earlier that day.

them. The tide of the battle had turned. Despite this, the combat continued to be vicious, often hand-to-hand, and continued unabated until a severe thunderstorm temporarily halted the battle.⁸²

During the storm, Herkimer gathered his scattered militia and formed them into a defensive circle on the ridge. After the rain stopped, the Loyalist reinforcements led by Col. Butler reversed their coats to make militia believe that they were a sortie from Stanwix. Many militiamen initially fell for the ruse, but once it was discovered the militia fought back viciously. The battle continued until Brant heard the three cannon shots from Stanwix and called for the Indians to retreat. The Loyalists retreated soon after. The Seneca Chief Blacksnake wrote of the carnage at Oriskany. "There I have Seen the most Dead Bodies all it over that I never Did see, . . . I thought at that time the Blood Shed a Stream Running Down on the Decending ground . . ." ⁸³ After the battle, the militia collected their wounded and returned home, never reaching Fort Stanwix.

While the battle raged at Oriskany, Herkimer's runners arrived at Fort Stanwix and delivered his request for a sortie to Gansevoort. He immediately ordered Lt. Col. Marinus Willett with 250 volunteers and one cannon on a sortie to raid the Loyalist and Indian camps. Willett wrote that "Nothing could be more fortunate than this enterprise."⁸⁴ His force "routed two of the enemy's encampments"⁸⁵ and "destroyed all the provisions that were in them. . . ."⁸⁶ After a brief skirmish with a small force of Regulars and Loyalists, Willett made it back into the fort without

⁸² Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley*, 175-177.

⁸³ Governor Blacksnake, *Chainbreaker: The Revolutionary War Memoirs of Governor Blacksnake as told to Benjamin Williams* Edited by Thomas S. Abler, (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 128, 130.

⁸⁴ Lt. Col. Marinus Willett, "Hartford, August 21, 1777, The Following is a Narrative of Part of the Transactions At and Near Fort Stanwix, Since the Investiture of the Place by the Enemy, Given in Manuscript by Lieutenant-Colonel Willet, of that Garrison," Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 43410 (filmed). http://infoweb.newsbank.com/iw-search/we/Evans/?p_product=EAIX&_theme=eai&_nbid=M63H63SYMTI4Njc1MTQxMS4yNjk1NzY6MToxMzoyMDguOTUuNDkuMTM4&_action=doc&_queryname=2&_docref=v2:0F2B1FCB879B099B@EAIX - 0F2F82203452AF10@43410-@1&mode=citation (accessed October 10, 2010).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

losing a man. Willett's force brought twenty-one wagonloads of much needed equipment and supplies into Fort Stanwix.⁸⁷ A major coup in this raid was the capture of Sir John Johnson's papers for the expedition. These documents provided important information to Gansevoort on St. Leger's plans.

The destruction of their camps enraged the returning Indians, already dispirited due to their heavy losses at Oriskany, and their captives bore the brunt of this anger. Blacksnake described the treatment of many prisoners held by the Senecas stating, "they was Kill By Clubing & Running through a certain Distance and they ware not one Escape they ware all put to Death by that way. . . ."⁸⁸ Many captives died in especially brutal ways. Johnson and Brant requested on August 7 to take the Loyalists and Indians down the Mohawk and complete what they started at Oriskany. St. Leger refused to allow this course of action since he would not have enough men to keep up the siege if they left.

On August 8 St. Leger sent a flag to Fort Stanwix under Col. Butler, Major Wesley Ancron, and a Surgeon with his terms for the surrender of the fort. These terms stated that the garrison would be protected from the Indians by St. Leger if they surrendered immediately. The terms also stated that if the fort was carried by storm St. Leger would not be able to protect the lives of the garrison or the Mohawk Valley residents from Indian reprisals.⁸⁹ Willett replied to Major Ancron in no uncertain terms stating, "Our answer was that should this be the case, the blood of these inhabitants would be upon the heads of Mr. Butler and his employers, not upon us, and that such proceedings would ever remain a stigma upon the name of Britain; but for our parts

⁸⁷ Colbrath, "August 6, 1777, Journal Entry," in *Days of Siege*, 29-31.

⁸⁸ Blacksnake, *Chainbreaker*, 130.

⁸⁹ Colbrath, "August 8, 1777, Journal Entry," in *Days of Siege*, 33-34.

we were determined to defend the fort.”⁹⁰ Gansevoort officially rejected the terms the next day. Gansevoort wrote “Your letter of this day’s date I have received, in answer to which I say, that it is my determined resolution, with the forces under my command, to defend this fort to the last extremity, in behalf of the United American States, who have placed me here to defend it against all their enemies.”⁹¹ The longer that Fort Stanwix’s garrison held out, it became less likely that St. Leger would reach Albany.

St. Leger then began to bombard Stanwix and to construct a siege trench towards the fort. He realized that his small fieldpieces were impotent against the walls of the fort and that he needed to try a different approach to using his artillery. St. Leger wrote, “At this time, Lieutenant Glennie of the artillery . . . proposed a conversion of the royals . . . into howitzers. The ingenuity and feasibility of this measure striking me very strongly, the business was set about immediately.”⁹² St. Leger again faced disappointment as his “mortizers”⁹³ failed to damage the fort’s works. His army expanded the siege trenches and blocked the creek that supplied water to the fort, but the garrison had already dug two wells in preparation for this event.⁹⁴ On August 13, Ensign Walter Butler led a “Flag Party” of eighteen enemy troops to German Flats, but his party was taken prisoner two days later by Continentals from Fort Dayton.⁹⁵ One Loyalist from Butler’s group, Hon Yost Schuyler, would play a major role in the eventual raising of the siege.

⁹⁰ Willett, “Hartford, August 21, 1777, Narrative” http://infoweb.newsbank.com/iw-search/we/Evans/?p_product=EAIX& theme=eai& nbid=M63H63SYMTI4Njc1MTQxMS4yNjk1NzY6MToxMzoyMDguOTUuNDkuMTM4& action=doc& queryname=2& docref=v2:0F2B1_FCB879B099B@EAIX-0F2F82203452AF10@43410-@1& mode=citation (accessed October 10, 2010).

⁹¹ Colonel Peter Gansevoort to Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger, August 9, 1777, in William L. Stone, *Life of Joseph Brant-Thayendanegea: Including the Border Wars of the American Revolution and Sketches of the Indian Campaigns of Generals Harmar, St. Clair, and Wayne*, vol. 1 (New York: George Dearborn and Co., 1838), 252-253.

⁹² Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger to Lieutenant General John Burgoyne, August 27, 1777, in Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley*, 230.

⁹³ A Cohorn mortar tube placed on a carriage for a three-pounder fieldpiece, as done here by St. Leger’s artillerymen, was called a “mortizer.”

⁹⁴ Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley*, 217.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 224-229.

During these events, St. Leger's siege trench advanced close enough to the fort that the men digging could only work at night due to the fire from the fort. Sappers were almost close enough to mine under the fort's walls. Gansevoort realized that if relief did not arrive soon Stanwix would fall.

On the night of August 8, Willett, and Lt. Levi Stockwell escaped through British lines in order to get reinforcements to relieve Stanwix,⁹⁶ arriving at Fort Dayton on August 10. At Fort Dayton, Willett learned that Gen. Schuyler ordered elements of the 1NY, 2NY, and 4NY as well as the Massachusetts Brigade of Brigadier General Ebenezer Learned to march to the relief of Fort Stanwix.⁹⁷ Maj. Gen. Benedict Arnold volunteered to command the relief force of Continentals and any militia he could drum up along the way. Willett arrived in Albany and reported to his superiors on the state of Fort Stanwix in time to return to the Mohawk Valley with Arnold.

After arriving at Fort Dayton, Arnold began planning how to relieve Fort Stanwix. One thing was certain, he did not want his column of 1,000 Continentals and militia to face the same fate as Herkimer's militia. Arnold called a council of war with his command's senior officers to determine their course of action. This council decided that their force was "not equal to that of the enemy, and it would be imprudent and putting too much to hazard to attempt the march to the relief of Fort Schuyler, until the army is reinforced . . ."⁹⁸ Arnold's war council also decided to request that General Gates "immediately send such reinforcements to us as will enable us to march to the relief of the fort, with a probability of succeeding . . ."⁹⁹ Arnold realized even with Gansevoort's 750 men included in his manpower totals that enemy forces outnumbered his own.

⁹⁶ Colbrath, "August 8, 1777, Journal Entry," in *Days of Siege*, 33-34.

⁹⁷ Luzader, *Saratoga*, 136-138.

⁹⁸ Major General Horatio Gates, "Report of Council of War at German Flatts, August 21, 1777," in Luzader, *Saratoga*, 137.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

What Arnold did not know was that St. Leger's Indians were very demoralized from the losses in men and material they incurred on August 6.

The biggest issue Arnold dealt with at this time was avoiding a second Oriskany-type ambush, as his force needed to cover the same route taken by Herkimer's force. These fears were not unfounded, as St. Leger tried to convince the Indians to lead another ambush after he heard reports of Arnold's approach. St. Leger even offered to bring the Regulars under his personal command to assist the Indians in an ambush. However Arnold discovered a way to drive St. Leger's army from Fort Stanwix without firing a shot.

One of the Loyalists captured in Walter Butler's "Flag Party" was Hon Yost Schuyler. On August 21 Schuyler's mother and brother begged Arnold to spare his life, believing that all the Loyalists were to hang. Lt. Col. John Brooks came up with an idea to have Schuyler "pardoned" at the gallows, shoot his coat full of holes as if he escaped a pursuing force, and run to Fort Stanwix. Upon arrival, Schuyler would tell the Indians that Gen. Arnold was en route with thousands of men to relieve the fort and would slaughter all who stood in opposition to his force. Some Oneidas would follow behind Schuyler, repeating the story in order to ensure his credibility.¹⁰⁰ To ensure Schuyler's compliance, his brother was held as a prisoner in his place. If Schuyler failed, he was told that his brother would hang.

On August 19 Gansevoort sent two privates through enemy lines to Fort Dayton in order to bring updated information on the siege to the Continentals garrisoned there. These men also were to get news on any incoming reinforcements. By August 21 Gansevoort was getting nervous due to the lack of outside news, declining provisions, and the oncoming siege trenches. Gansevoort decided that if help did not arrive soon he would lead a late night breakout and try to fight his way through St. Leger's lines. That same day St. Leger received the discouraging news

¹⁰⁰ Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley*, 243-246.

of Arnold's force heading toward Fort Stanwix. He reported that after hearing of the relief force, "The same zeal no longer animated the Indians; they complained of our thinness of troops, and their former losses."¹⁰¹ In a meeting with the Indian chiefs, he "promised to lead them on myself, and bring into the field 300 of the best troops."¹⁰² The Indians promised St. Leger that they would follow him into battle if he would go on a reconnaissance of the battleground, "accompanied by some of their chief warriors, to settle the plan of operations."¹⁰³ For all his planning, St. Leger's army would not get the chance to pull off a second Oriskany-type ambush.

On August 22 Hon Yost Schuyler and the Oneidas spread their information about the extent of Arnold's force among the Indians, even telling St. Leger himself.¹⁰⁴ After hearing these reports, St. Leger's army abandoned most of its supplies and equipment and retreated in great disorder with panic spreading rapidly among the men.¹⁰⁵ His main force fled so quickly that many of the artillerymen and the Canadians and Loyalists digging the siege trenches did not know the army had left until it was nearly too late for them to escape. An unknown British officer wrote that "St. Leger's retreat, as it is called, turns out to be a downright flight, if leaving his tents, baggage, ammunition, and hiding his artillery can be called so."¹⁰⁶ St. Leger's rapid retreat from Fort Stanwix highlighted the success of Benedict Arnold's foray into psychological warfare, especially through the use of the rumors spread by Hon Yost Schuyler. On August 23, Arnold, after hearing word of St. Leger's retreat, ordered a forced march to Stanwix. On the next day Arnold and his 1,000 men arrived at Fort Stanwix, ending the siege.

¹⁰¹ Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger to Lieutenant General John Burgoyne, August 27, 1777, in Watt, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley*, 246.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Willard Sterne Randall, *Benedict Arnold: Patriot and Traitor* (New York: Quill/William Morrow, 1990), 347-348.

¹⁰⁵ Nester, *The Frontier War of American Independence*, 174-175.

¹⁰⁶ Anonymous to Lord George Germain, September 4, 1777, in Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 145.

The massive amounts of supplies and equipment left behind by St. Leger's army would help to provision the fort, at least for the near future. Men from the fort's garrison brought all of these materials into Stanwix. On August 26 Arnold returned to Major General Horatio Gates' army that was blocking the British force led by Lt. Gen. John Burgoyne north of Albany. Arnold took all of the Continentals with him except for Gansevoort's 3NY and six companies of the 1NY that remained at Fort Stanwix to assist in defending the frontiers.

Fort Stanwix's successful defense against St. Leger's expedition prevented his forces from marching down the Mohawk Valley toward Albany. This success occurred through St. Leger's army following the available waterways on its march, in order to ease the transportation of supplies and heavy equipment. Taking the Mohawk River route forced St. Leger to besiege the fort. His dismissal of intelligence, on the state of Fort Stanwix and its garrison, that countered what he had been told at the start of his campaign also contributed to the American victory.

The defeat of St. Leger at Fort Stanwix gave a much needed morale boost to both New Yorkers and the Continental forces gathering to stop Burgoyne's army. This change in public sentiment was evident when New York's Lieutenant-Governor, Pierre Van Cortlandt discussed the recent events in an August 26 letter to John Hancock. "The joint Result of these providential Instances of Success [Stanwix and Oriskany] hath revived the drooping Hopes of the Disponding and given new Vigor to the firm and determined; we have therefore the pleasing Expectation of compelling General Burgoyne in his turn to retire."¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately this boost in morale among New Yorkers did not last long. The failure of St. Leger to take Fort Stanwix did not end the war in the Mohawk Valley; it was only the beginning.

¹⁰⁷ Lieutenant Governor Pierre Van Cortlandt to John Hancock, August 26, 1777, in Jacob Judd, *Correspondence of the Van Cortlandt Family of Van Cortlandt Manor, 1748-1800* (Tarrytown, New York: Sleepy Hollow Restorations, 1977), 233. [brackets mine].

From the time of the reconstruction of Fort Stanwix in 1776, many American officers and officials believed that the fort controlled the invasion routes into the Mohawk Valley. This led to a belief that as long as Fort Stanwix held, the Mohawk Valley could be protected from enemy attack. The victory over St. Leger cemented this opinion among officials. Between 1778 and 1781, the Mohawk Valley residents, the army, Congress, and New York State learned the hard way that there were many directions the enemy could attack Tryon County, and Stanwix only blocked one of them. These enemy attacks on the Mohawk Valley struck from all directions due to a change in British strategy that after 1778 focused on using Loyalist and Indian raids to prevent the use of the valley's crops to supply the Continental Army.

The war on the Mohawk Valley continued with bloody Indian raids throughout 1778. In February the spirits of the garrison of Stanwix were still high as they worked to complete the fortifications and to gather provisions. George I. Denniston wrote to Governor George Clinton,

We are making all the possible preparations for the ensuing campaign at this Garrison that the season will admit of; we have got in about 1000 Picquets, a large quantity of Square Timber for Bomb proof Barracks and about 400 Cord of firewood, Provisions are daily coming in, . . . I am in hops [sic] we Shall have enough to . . . stand a six month Siege, should the Enemy . . . mak [sic] any attempts this way next Season.¹⁰⁸

Denniston listed the strength of the garrison of Fort Stanwix, still Gansevoort's 3NY, as consisting of "438 Rank & File, in good Health and full of vigor."¹⁰⁹ Fort Stanwix received an adequate supply of provisions via sled transport during the winter of 1777-1778, keeping morale high. Once the weather cleared in the spring, the threat of Indian attack increased dramatically making Stanwix not only difficult but also dangerous to resupply. Once the raiding parties began their attacks, there were Indian war parties constantly hovering in the woods outside of the fort

¹⁰⁸ George I. Denniston to Governor George Clinton, February 20, 1778, in *Public Papers of George Clinton: First Governor of New York, 1777-1795—1801-1804* vol. 2 (New York: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, 1900), 781.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

waiting to ambush the small work details that daily left Stanwix. The constant harassment of the garrison by these war parties began to demonstrate that Fort Stanwix was not designed to wage irregular warfare.

Throughout the late winter and early spring of 1778, many settlements requested Continentals to be garrisoned in the forts near their towns. Several residents of the town of Cherry Valley signed a letter requesting “a Number of Troops or Raingers, to Guard the frontiers of the Western part of this State. . .”¹¹⁰ These men worried about a possible upcoming attack by Joseph Brant and told Gov. Clinton that “some Families are leaveing their Farms & moving down into the Country, and we have Great reason to fear it will be the Case with us, or fall a pray to their Savage Barbarities. . .”¹¹¹ The people’s requests for Continentals to defend them from Indian raids demonstrated that there were many directions the enemy could take into the Mohawk Valley that Fort Stanwix could not adequately cover. Throughout the spring of 1778, residents of outlying settlements along the Mohawk Valley began moving to towns and settlements with garrisoned forts or even out of the area altogether.¹¹²

During the early months of 1778, Gov. Clinton and the Continental Army worked tirelessly to build up New York’s frontier defenses. In March, Maj. Gen. Marie Joseph Yves Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, while on a tour of the Northern Department, ordered the construction of two new forts in Cherry Valley and in the Oneida village of Kawnowalohale. Lafayette also ordered several repairs to be conducted at Fort Stanwix and sent Col. Ichabod Alden’s Sixth Massachusetts Regiment to garrison the forts along the Schoharie Valley and in

¹¹⁰ William Dickson and others to Governor George Clinton, February 23, 1778, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 2, 821.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Glenn F. Williams, *Year of the Hangman: George Washington’s Campaign Against the Iroquois* (Yardley, Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2006), 77-80.

the town of Cherry Valley.¹¹³ In mid-April, Ensign Walter Butler escaped from house arrest and fled west to Niagara, where he arrived on May 17, 1778.¹¹⁴ Abraham Yates wrote, “News we have none, Except a Disagreeable Tale about the Escape of Mr. Butler who went off, I think, a Saturday Night. Could He be got again it would be a Lucky Circumstance but I am afraid it will not be the Case.”¹¹⁵ Walter Butler would not be recaptured, and he received a reputation as a murderer for the horrific atrocities committed by Indians under his command during his raid on Cherry Valley in November 1778. The Mohawk Valley endured Walter Butler’s raiding activities until his death at the Battle of West Canada Creek in October 1781.

Small scale Indian and Loyalist raids began in April, destroying isolated settlements, including Manheim and Ephratah, north of the Mohawk River. From the outset of these raids, the garrison of the 3NY at Fort Stanwix was nearly impotent to respond, due to the distance of the fort from the settlements and its inability to know the direction the raiders would attack. The first major destructive raid by a large force struck Cobleskill on May 30. Brant’s force of 350 routed a combined force of 100 Continentals and militia and burned Cobleskill. Immense fear spread throughout the Mohawk Valley. Colonel Jacob Klock observed

Sir, I have received three Expresses from Cherry Valley half an hour’s time, . . . I received another request from Colo. Ballinger, and he informs me that he . . . Expected the Flatts will be Run off every minute . . . likewise we have certain intelligence that Cobus Kill is Run of; . . . Sir, the Enemy strikes in so many places, that we are not able to stand them; and I would be very much obliged to You if You would Send me assistance Immediately upon my Receipt. Your delay may cause the loss of the River and likewise of the lives of Several hundred men women and children.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Nester, *The Frontier War of American Independence*, 189-190.

¹¹⁴ Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 164-165.

¹¹⁵ Abraham Yates to Governor George Clinton, April 21, 1778, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 3, 203-204.

¹¹⁶ Colonel Jacob Klock to Brigadier General Abraham Ten Broeck, May 31, 1778, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 3, 382.

The local militias and regiments of Continentals garrisoned piecemeal at local forts were powerless to prevent the burning of the settlements, often arriving just after the enemy left the area. Yet the garrison of Fort Stanwix remained unable to come to their assistance.

That summer Loyalist and Indian forces raided with impunity, striking various settlements throughout Tryon County. On July 18, 1778, Joseph Brant's raiders destroyed the settlements of Springfield and Andrustown, and when the Tryon County Militia marched from German Flats to stop them, the raiders circled around them and briefly attacked German Flats. Throughout 1778, both Tryon County and New York State officials and officers repeatedly requested that strong garrisons of Continentals be placed throughout the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys to better defend against these raids. Gen. Philip Schuyler reported,

I received a message . . . from the Oneidas of Oriska Informing me that the Enemy had destroyed Anderson's Purchase and Springfield, that they expected the German Flatts would next be attacked . . . It is much to be Lamented that the finest Grain County In this State is on the point of being Entirely ruined for want of a body of Continental troops. If any are to be sent, the Greatest dispatch should be used and then, perhaps, they may still come in time to save part of the Settlements and numerous fine crops of wheat.¹¹⁷

Brant's force destroyed German Flats on September 17. Due to a timely warning, nearly all of the residents fled to safety at Forts Dayton and Herkimer. Brant's force completely destroyed these areas, leaving just prior to the arrival of Col. Jacob Klock's militia, and Col. Ichabod Alden's Continentals. Again, the Garrison of Fort Stanwix was completely unable to aid the militia and the Massachusetts troops in defending German Flats. It would have taken the 3NY at least two days to march there.

Throughout 1778, there were repeated rumors of an upcoming attack on the village of Cherry Valley. These only increased after the summer attacks on Cobleskill, Andrustown,

¹¹⁷ Major General Philip Schuyler to Governor George Clinton, July 20, 1778, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 3,565.

Springfield, and German Flats. Meanwhile, the residents of Cherry Valley built a fort for Col. Alden's Continentals. Alden made several mistakes during his short command at Fort Alden, including allowing many of his officers to board in the town rather than reside in the fort.¹¹⁸ This left his officer corps highly susceptible to death or capture in the event of a surprise attack.

Things remained somewhat quiet in Cherry Valley throughout most of the fall, until November 6, when Alden received a letter from Gansevoort at Fort Stanwix warning him of a major enemy force approaching.¹¹⁹ Alden replied that he received Gansevoort's "Intelligence . . . of a Large Boddy of the Enemy who ware Collected on the Susquehanna and Ware Desird to attack this place. . . ." ¹²⁰ He also appraised Gansevoort of the arrival of General Edward Hand in Cherry Valley to inspect the fort and garrison. The townspeople asked Hand for permission to place their belongings in the fort, a request he granted. Yet, soon after Hand returned to Albany, Alden ordered their belongings removed from the fort. Alden did this on the basis that he had sent out scouting parties, and that they would give the town plenty of warning of an incoming attack. They failed to deliver any warning as these scouts were captured on the night of November 10. Fort Stanwix's efforts to warn Alden of the coming attack on Cherry Valley was a major intelligence success that gave the town and its garrison five days to prepare for the attack. Yet, Alden's incompetent actions and general unpreparedness squandered a golden opportunity to minimize the loss of life in the village or possibly defeat a major raiding force.

Early in the morning on November 11, a force of 620 Indians, Loyalists and Regulars, led by Captain Walter Butler, Joseph Brant, and other Indian chiefs, entered Cherry Valley.¹²¹ The initial attack was a success, but Captain Butler lost control of his Indians and Indian Department

¹¹⁸ Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 185-186.

¹¹⁹ Colonel Peter Gansevoort to Colonel Ichabod Alden, November 6, 1778, in Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 185-186.

¹²⁰ Colonel Ichabod Alden to Colonel Peter Gansevoort, November 8, 1778, in *ibid.*, 186.

¹²¹ Williams, *Year of the Hangman*, 177-178.

Rangers who killed many women and children setting a bloody precedent for future raids. This occurred despite the actions of the Regulars, Loyalists, and Brant's Mohawks to stop these atrocities.¹²² In this attack, Col. Alden was among the forty-eight soldier and civilian dead, with fifteen soldiers and about seventy civilians taken prisoner. Except for Fort Alden, the entirety of the settlement was destroyed.¹²³ After the raid, Capt. Butler released about forty-five prisoners, mainly women and children, giving them a letter to bring to Gen. Schuyler. Butler excused himself from responsibility for the civilian deaths, instead blaming them on the Indians' anger. His letter concluded with this statement,

I am sure you are conscious that Colonel [John] Butler or myself have no desire that your women or children should be hurt. But be assured, Sir, that if you persevere in detaining my father's family that we shall no longer take the same pains to restrain the Indians from killing prisoners, women and children that we have heretofore done.¹²⁴

After Cherry Valley, the stakes in the frontier war changed. Women and children were now considered legitimate targets by many Indians, and even some Loyalists. After the destruction of Cherry Valley, the raids on the Mohawk Valley frontiers ended for the year.

During the summer of 1778, the soldiers of the 3NY at Fort Stanwix continued their efforts to defend the western frontier of Tryon County. Gansevoort received reports that the British had stockpiled supplies and provisions at Fort Oswego in preparation for a new attempt to take Stanwix. He sent a party led by Lt. Thomas McClellan on July 10 to destroy Oswego and any supplies the British stored there. McClellan's men successfully destroyed the abandoned fort and returned to Fort Stanwix.

During the summer of 1778 the 3NY grew tired of its continued service at Stanwix. This was due to the danger, boredom from lack of major campaigning (or combat), and the difficulty

¹²² Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 187-190.

¹²³ William McKendry, "Journal Entry for November 11, 1778," in Smy, *Butler Papers* vol. BR1778, 85.

¹²⁴ Captain Walter Butler to Major General Philip Schuyler, November 12, 1778, in *ibid.*, 86.

in resupplying the fort. Fort Stanwix became more difficult to resupply through the combination of distance and the threat of enemy attack. The Indians that lurked near Fort Stanwix in order to capture or kill unsuspecting soldiers provided the British with a steady stream of information on the fort. British Captain Thomas Aubrey explained, "I am informed by Mr. Adams that the rebels are strongly fortifying Fort Stanwix. The prisoners say that there is five hundred and forty men in the fort, and that they have sent from thence for five thousand men to go against Colonel Butler."¹²⁵ These repairs to the fortifications had been ongoing since the first units were charged with rebuilding Fort Stanwix in the summer of 1776.

In the fall of 1778 Gansevoort requested that the 3NY be relieved from duty due to his men's extreme dislike of their service at Fort Stanwix. On October 17, Washington sent Col. Goose Van Schaick's 1NY to relieve Gansevoort's regiment. Washington wrote to Brig. Gen. James Clinton, "I have determined to send Col. Van Schaick's Regiment to Fort Schuyler to relieve Col. Ganseworth [sic]. You will signify this to Col. Van Schaick that he may be preparing for it. So soon as the Clothing, expected in camp, arrives; he shall have an order for a competent supply and will then proceed."¹²⁶ The 1NY left Albany for Fort Stanwix on November 12 and arrived on December 23, 1778.¹²⁷

In light of the devastation exacted by the 1778 raids, New York State Governor George Clinton realized that the defensive strategy of attempting to prevent raids with Continental Army manned forts had failed miserably. Seeing this failure, Governor Clinton along with several

¹²⁵ Captain Thomas Aubrey to Governor-General Frederick Haldimand, September 2, 1778, in Smy, *The Butler Papers* vol. BR1778, 58.

¹²⁶ General George Washington to Brigadier General James Clinton, October 17, 1778, in George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799* vol. 13 ed. John C. Fitzpatrick. <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=16008480&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+13:+To+BRIGADIER+GENERAL+JAMES+CLINTON&query=Fort+Schuyler&d=> (accessed October 19, 2010). [hereafter as Fitzpatrick].

¹²⁷ T. W. Egly Jr., *Goose Van Schaick of Albany, 1736-1789: The Continental Army's Senior Colonel* (T. W. Egly Jr., 1992), 53-58.

government officials and army officers, called for the formation of an offensive campaign strategy to take the war to the enemy. The delegates to Congress from New York, in their reply to Gov. Clinton, wrote the following:

While we lament the reiterated sufferings of our Fellow Citizens from the Depredations of the savages and the disaffected, we agree with your Excellency that every defensive system in a predatory war must prove vain and Chimerical and that a vigorous Irruption into the Enemy's Country can alone promise advantage and Safety. To this great object we shall extend our Views and endeavour to have it carried into Effect as soon as the Season will permit.¹²⁸

Throughout the winter and spring of 1778-1779, Gen. Washington planned a massive expedition that would hopefully destroy the Iroquois Indians. Washington chose Major General John Sullivan to lead this invasion of the Iroquois homelands.¹²⁹ There would be two major campaigns in this: Col. Goose Van Schaick's Onondaga expedition in April 1779 and the Clinton-Sullivan Campaign of July through September 1779.

In April 1779, Washington called for an expedition from Stanwix to destroy the villages of the Onondaga Tribe. This raid was carried out as an attempt to end the Onondaga's participation in the raids on the Mohawk Valley.¹³⁰ Despite the extensive secrecy that surrounded the preparations for this expedition, the Oneidas saw the gathering men and supplies as a sign of a coming expedition and asked to join it. In order to prevent them from alerting their Onondaga neighbors and relatives, Colonel Goose Van Schaick first told the Oneida warriors there was no expedition. He then honored their requests to go on their own mission, sending an officer and

¹²⁸ New York Delegates to Governor George Clinton, December 1, 1778, in *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789* vol. 11 October 1, 1778 – January 31, 1779. ed. Paul H. Smith, (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1985), 273-274.

¹²⁹ Joseph R. Fischer, *A Well-Executed Failure: The Sullivan Campaign Against the Iroquois, July-September 1779* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 1-2.

¹³⁰ Colonel Van Schaick's expedition had two purposes. The first was to end the Onondaga's participation in the raids on the Mohawk Valley. The campaign was unsuccessful in this part of its mission as the destruction of their villages and the capture (and alleged rape) of several Onondaga women drove the tribe closer to the British. The second purpose was to remove a threat from the rear of that summer's planned campaign against the Western Iroquois tribes. In this part of its mission Van Schaick's campaign was successful.

some Continentals with them to strike Fort Oswegatchie.¹³¹ On April 19, Colonel Goose Van Schaick, Lt. Col. Marinus Willett, and Major Robert Cochran led 558 Continentals to destroy Onondaga, the capital of the Iroquois Confederacy. Van Schaick's men quickly surrounded and destroyed several of the Onondaga villages. His force completed the six-day, 180-mile forced march from Fort Stanwix to Onondaga and back without receiving any casualties.¹³²

Van Schaick and his men received extensive praise for the successful expedition from Washington.¹³³ The Continental Congress also gave its thanks to Van Schaick and his men. John Jay wrote, "Congress have directed their Thanks to be presented to Colonel Van Schaick & the Troops under his Command on the Onandaga Expedition. It appears to me most proper that this be communicated to him by your Excellency, & therefore a Copy of the Resolution on that Subject is enclosed."¹³⁴ After the conclusion of the campaign, the companies who joined it from other Continental units returned to their respective regiments in order to prepare for the summer's campaign against the Iroquois.

The completed plans for the Sullivan expedition called for two main forces of Continental soldiers to destroy the Iroquois Territory. The first force of 1,600 Continentals under Brig. Gen. James Clinton left Canajoharie, New York on August 7 and met Gen. Sullivan's 2,300 Continentals at Tioga on August 22. Washington's orders to Gen. Sullivan stated,

The expedition you are appointed to command is directed against the hostile tribes of the Six Nations of Indians, with their associates and adherents. The immediate

¹³¹ Egly, *Goose Van Schaick of Albany*, 58-60.

¹³² Captain Thomas Machin, "April 24, 1779 Journal Entry," in *Journals of the Military Expedition of Major General John Sullivan Against the Six Nations of Indians in 1779: with Records of Centennial Celebrations* ed. Frederick Cook. (Auburn, New York: Knapp, Peck & Thomson, 1887), 193.

¹³³ General George Washington, "General Orders of May 8, 1779," in Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, vol. 15, 26-27. <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=18433712&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+15:+GENERAL+ORDERS&query=Fort+Schuyler&> = (accessed October 21, 2010).

¹³⁴ John Jay to General George Washington, May 10, 1779, in Paul H. Smith, ed., *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789*, vol. 12 February 1-May 31, 1779, 454.

objects are the total destruction devastation of their settlements and the capture of as many prisoners of every age and sex as possible. It will be essential to ruin their crops now in the ground and preventing their planting more.¹³⁵

On August 26, Sullivan's army of nearly 4,000 men marched into the territory of the Iroquois, destroying Chemung on August 28. The next day, Sullivan's men routed a large Loyalist and Indian force at the Battle of Newtown.¹³⁶ Between August 29 and September 15, Sullivan's army marched north and west, destroying the Indian villages between Newtown and Chenussio, with all of their crops.

After Newtown, the campaign did not face resistance until a scouting party under Lieutenant Thomas Boyd was ambushed on its return from Chenussio on September 13. After the destruction of Chenussio, Sullivan's army began their march back to Tioga with detachments sweeping down the east and west sides of the Cayuga and Seneca Lakes to destroy the Cayuga villages, and any Seneca towns missed on the route taken earlier. Gansevoort received orders to march due east down the Mohawk River and arrest any Mohawks still living in the villages of Canajoharie and Tribes Hill. On September 30, the expedition, except for Gansevoort's detachment, returned to Tioga.¹³⁷

Throughout 1777, 1778, and into 1779, Fort Stanwix and its garrisons were instrumental in helping to assist the United States and the State of New York in their relations with the Indians. This helped to solidify the ties of the Oneida and Tuscarora tribes to the United States during the war.¹³⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Cornelius Van Dyck of the 1NY wrote the following.

A Party of about seventeen Indians who have fled from Ochquago have made

¹³⁵ General George Washington to Major General John Sullivan, May 31, 1779, in Fischer, *A Well Executed Failure*, 41.

¹³⁶ Sergeant Moses Fellows, "August 29, 1779 Journal Entry," in Cook, *Journals of the Military Expedition of Major General John Sullivan Against the Six Nations of Indians in 1779*, 88.

¹³⁷ Major General John Sullivan, "Major Gen. Sullivan's Official Report to Congress, Sept. 30, 1779," in *Journals of the Military Expedition of Major General John Sullivan Against the Six Nations of Indians in 1779*, 302-303.

¹³⁸ T.W. Egly, Jr., *History of the First New York Regiment, 1775-1783* (Hampton, New Hampshire: Peter E. Randall, 1981), 117-119.

application to me for Provisions; they say Genl. Schuyler has Promised they should Draw Provisions at this place. I have put them off until I have your Directions in what manner to proceed with them. The garrison is Reduced to 15 Days of Salt Provisions; the fresh Beef is gone and as the Indians are more or Less Daily at the garrison, they take of considerable Quantities. I, therefore, Request a suply may be forwarded to this place as soon as Possible.¹³⁹

During the winter of 1778-1779, the garrison of Fort Stanwix and state officials met with Oneida, Tuscarora, and some Onondaga delegations either to bolster ties or ensure neutrality.¹⁴⁰

After the conclusion of the Onondaga Campaign in April 1779, garrison life at Fort Stanwix returned to its usual lack of action, with the 1NY remaining in garrison. Van Schaick's Expedition alarmed many of the pro-American Oneidas who had close family and marriage ties with the Onondagas. The Oneidas went to the fort and asked Van Schaick the reasons for the campaign against the Onondagas, and whether the attack was planned or a mistake. Van Schaick replied in a manner that pacified the angered American allies.¹⁴¹

I am glad to see my friends, the Oneidas and Tuscaroras. I perfectly remember the engagements the Five Nations entered into four years ago, and that they promised to preserve a strict and honorable neutrality during the present war, . . . But the Onondagas have been great murderers; we have found the scalps of our brothers at their Castle. They were cut off not by mistake, but by design—I was ordered to do it—and it is done. . . . I am a warrior. My duty is to obey the orders which they send me.¹⁴²

Throughout this time period, Fort Stanwix and its garrisons were instrumental in keeping relations between the Oneidas and Tuscaroras and the United States on good footing.

Stanwix, throughout this period, continued to be the focus of rumored British attacks. The garrison would pass this information on to the Continental and militia commanders in the Mohawk Valley and Albany. This intelligence, some valid, some not, made the lives of officers

¹³⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Cornelius Van Dyck to Brigadier General James Clinton, December 23, 1778, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 4, 418.

¹⁴⁰ Williams, *Year of the Hangman*, 202-204.

¹⁴¹ Egly Jr., *Goose Van Schaick of Albany*, 65.

¹⁴² Colonel Goose Van Schaick, "Speech in Reply to the Oneidas, April, 1779," in Stone, *Life of Brant*, vol. 1, 409.

on the Mohawk Valley and at Stanwix very difficult. They were constantly on edge, preparing for raids that sometimes did not occur. Lt. Col. Cornelius Van Dyck reported in October 1779,

On Wednesday last I was informed by . . . several of the Oneida Indians, that the Enemy had appeared in force at Oswego . . . that Colonel Johnson with a thousand Indians is on his way to this place; besides a large Body of Regular Troops. Previous to this, parties . . . sent from Oneida to Oswego, . . . were told by some of the Enemy Indians that a number of Heavy Cannon & Mortars with them, that the Regulars were to Besiege this Fort and . . . the Indians would destroy the Country down as far as Schenectady.¹⁴³

Sir John Johnson arrived at Oswego on October 13 with every intention of a strike against Fort Stanwix, the Mohawk Valley, and the Oneida Villages in retaliation for the Clinton-Sullivan Campaign. This plan was dropped due to the lateness of the season.¹⁴⁴

Lurking enemy raids began to be a major problem at Fort Stanwix throughout 1779. These attacks were aimed at small parties of men who left the fort to gather supplies. These raiding parties sought to capture prisoners, who the British would interrogate to gather information about the fort's defenses. One raid led to the capture of Lieutenant William Scudder and his party who were out cutting hay near Stanwix on July 23, 1779.¹⁴⁵ Another instance where Fort Stanwix's regiments lost men to the Indian raiders was on sod-cutting details to repair the forts walls. Raids such as these made it nearly impossible to leave the fort without a large force to provide security.

Lack of provisions was a chronic problem in the Continental Army and lasted the duration of the war. This issue worsened at Fort Stanwix through the constant threat of attacks.

¹⁴³ Lieutenant Colonel Cornelius Van Dyck to Colonel Goose Van Schaick, October 25, 1779, *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 5, 330.

¹⁴⁴ Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 223.

¹⁴⁵ Lieutenant William Scudder, *The Journal of William Scudder: An Officer in the Late New York Line, Who was Taken Captive by the Indians at Fort Stanwix, On the 23d of July, 1779, and was Holden a Prisoner in Canada Until October, 1782, and then Sent to New York and Admitted on Parole: with A Small Sketch of His Life, and some Occurrences of the War, Which Chiefly Happened Under His Notice Previous to His Captivity. Containing also, some Extracts from History, Novels, &c.* (Not Published: Printed for Author, 1794), 35-39.

The Oneidas also drew heavily from the supplies at Stanwix.¹⁴⁶ There was a general effort to keep as large a supply in Stanwix as possible, especially during the planning stages of the Clinton-Sullivan Campaign, when there was a possibility that the expedition might have advanced west from the Mohawk River into Iroquois territory. Washington wrote,

You are to order the Quarter Master and Commissary immediately to lay in as large a supply of provision as they possibly can at Fort Schuyler. This will be necessary, should it be finally determined to remove the troops up the River in preference to Susquehannah, or it will at any rate form an ample Magazine for the support of the Garrison. The collection of provision at that post will also hold up the appearance of operating from that quarter, altho' we may really have no such intent.¹⁴⁷

By the winter of 1779 New York State officials were only able to provision Fort Stanwix and the other forts on a day-by-day basis.¹⁴⁸

Throughout the period during the reconstruction of Fort Stanwix in July 1776 through the winter of 1779, the fort saw only limited success in its efforts to defend the Mohawk Valley from enemy invasion. In 1776 the refortification of Stanwix began amidst rumors of impending invasion by British, Loyalist, and Indian forces. While this invasion did not occur, reconstruction had advanced far enough that the fort could be defended if necessary. In 1777 the British under Barry St. Leger besieged Fort Stanwix. While still not completely restored, the fort withstood St. Leger's force and prevented it from sweeping down the Mohawk Valley to Albany. This also cemented the official mindset that, as long as Fort Stanwix remained in American hands, the Mohawk Valley could be successfully defended against enemy attack. This flawed school of thought proved false during the raids of 1778.

¹⁴⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Cornelius Van Dyck to Brigadier General James Clinton, December 23, 1778, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 4, 417-418.

¹⁴⁷ General George Washington to Brigadier General James Clinton, April 19, 1779, in Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, vol. 14, 415-416. <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=18052447&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+14:+To+BRIGADIER+GENERAL+JAMES+CLINTON&query=Fort+Schuyler&d=> (accessed on November 1, 2010).

¹⁴⁸ Governor George Clinton to General George Washington, December 26, 1779, in, *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 5, 430.

During the raids of 1778, the Loyalist and Indian parties demonstrated Fort Stanwix's inability to defend against an irregular war, where the enemy could strike from any direction, at most any place, at any time. Stanwix's garrison was unable to come to the assistance of the destroyed settlements in time to prevent or to drive off attacks. After the expedition against the Onondagas of Col. Goose Van Schaick in 1779, the usual supply problems and enemy attacks that had occurred since the rebuilding of the fort increased to levels that made Stanwix a drain on Continental Army resources and manpower.

Chapter Two:

The Events of January – August 1780, Fort Stanwix Untenable?

Throughout 1780 the financial and supply issues at both the state and the national level exacerbated the supply and manpower problems at Fort Stanwix. After declaring bankruptcy in December 1779, the Continental Congress overhauled the Staff Department system that supplied the Continental Army. This led to the formation of the Select Supply System that required the states to provide certain quotas of army supplies. This system proved inadequate to the task. Many states, including New York, had a difficult time acquiring the necessary supplies for many reasons, including enemy action.¹⁴⁹ New York waited for the fall harvest from two of its best grain producing areas, the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys, in order to fill its 1780 supply quotas.¹⁵⁰ In 1780, Sir Frederick Haldimand, the Governor of Canada, sent Sir John Johnson on two large raids in May and October, and also sent Joseph Brant on a large raid in July-August of that year. These raids not only destroyed the 1780 grain harvest and prevented New York from using it to resupply the Continental Army garrisons in the state, but also demonstrated the impotence of Fort Stanwix in defending against these enemy actions.

In December 1779, the Continental Congress realized it was almost bankrupt and looked for ways to cut costs and programs. As a result, Congress decided to hand the cost and problem of supplying the army over to the states through the State Supply System. On February 25, 1780, Congress sent out a resolution that told each of the states—except Georgia—their quotas for the coming campaign season.¹⁵¹ New York was to provide, “11,200 hundred weight of beef[.]”

¹⁴⁹ E. Wayne Carp, *To Starve the Army at Pleasure*, 175-187.

¹⁵⁰ Gavin K. Watt, *The Burning of the Valleys*, 266.

¹⁵¹ Continental Congress, *In Congress, February 25, 1780* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: David C. Claypoole, 1780), 1-4. In *Early American Imprints, Series 1: Evans, 1639-1800*, no. 17020. http://infoweb.newsbank.com/iw-search/we/Evans/?p_product=EAIX&theme=eai&nbid=O60P4EXFMTI4Mjg0NDk3My41NzE4MDg6MToxMzoyMDguOTUuNDkuMTM4&action=doc&queryname=4&doc_num=7&docref=v2:0F2B1FCB879B099B@EAIX-0F2FD416A02C01F8@17020-@1 (accessed October 24, 2010).

13,969 barrels of flour[,] 500 tons of hay[, and] 30,000 bushels of Indian corn, or other short forage equivalent.¹⁵² New York faced difficulties in its attempt to fulfill these quotas, while also supplying the New York Line and Levies regiments as well as the forts in the state.

Keeping the frontier fortifications supplied, especially Fort Stanwix, was a major undertaking even in peaceful conditions, and became even more difficult under the constant threat of enemy attacks. The severe winter of 1779-1780 made the resupply of Stanwix more difficult than usual, and Col. Van Schaick wrote to Washington about the dangerously low levels of supplies throughout the Northern Department.

The purchasing Commissaries inform me that they have not been enable [sic] to purchase provision during the course of last Winter, for the want of money, & that are still without, from which cause our Magazines in this quarter are at present reduced to so low a State, that but very small supplies can be drawn from them. I also beg leave to inform your Excellency that the ammunition at this place consists at present half a Ton of powder & Ball in proportion, a Quantity, which in all probability will be judged insufficient should we have frequent occasion to call out the Militia.¹⁵³

As the 1780 spring campaign season neared, Van Schaick urgently called for supplies for Fort Stanwix. “Let me intreat you to keep your Eyes well fixed towards Fort Schuyler. Make frequent inquiries whether the Mills at Schenectady & the River are Grinding Wheat for the use of that Garrison. Stimulate with your advise [sic] the Commissaries, & others concerned to forward the Flour to Fort Schuyler while it is yet time.”¹⁵⁴ The supply shortages at Fort Stanwix and the other frontier posts worsened considerably through the failure of the Select Supply System.

New York received a monthly supply quota above and beyond its original requests from the Continental Congress. According to Colonel Ephraim Blaine this quota consisted of “one hundred & forty barr’s o f flour and seventy one thousand six hundred & seventy five pounds of

¹⁵² Continental Congress, *In Congress, February 25, 1780*, 1.

¹⁵³ Colonel Goose Van Schaick to General George Washington, April 15, 1780, in Egly Jr., *History of the First New York Regiment*, 143.

¹⁵⁴ Colonel Goose Van Schaick to Henry Glen, February 17, 1780, in *ibid.*, 144-145.

Beef p Month; . . .”¹⁵⁵ He also wrote that the supplies were urgently needed since “there is fourteen Brigades assembled in this neighbourhood and Recruits hourly coming in, which with the followers of the army, now Consume one hundred barrels of flour, & Sixty five Beef Cattle daily.”¹⁵⁶ Governor George Clinton, while waiting for the quota to be gathered, had the New York State Assembly and Senate write to Congress for permission to change the state’s required beef quota to flour. Congress replied with this resolution

Congress passed the following resolution: Whereas the State of New York was required, by an act of Congress of the 25 February last, to furnish eleven thousand two hundred cwt. of beef; and whereas it will be of public advantage to procure flour as near as possible to the military posts and quarters of the army: *Resolved*, That Congress do agree, that the State of New York, according to their proposal set forth in the letter above mentioned, may substitute flour in lieu of any quantity of beef which may be deficient on the 1st day of November next, of the quota allotted to the said state, . . .¹⁵⁷

Though Clinton received permission from Congress to use flour to replace the unfilled beef quota, he had to wait for the grain to be harvested. Much of New York’s grain crop grew in the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys in Tryon and western Albany counties.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1780, Fort Stanwix remained in desperate need of food and ammunition. Van Schaick wrote “I have not hitherto been able with the utmost Exertions to throw into Fort Schuyler, more provisions than to feed them from hand to mouth, Altho I shall leave no means untried to have the Garrison of Fort Schuyler supplied, it is at present out of my power to promise that I shall be able to accomplish it. Provisions & men to guard them up are wanted.”¹⁵⁸ Clinton, due to the danger of Indian attack, could not send enough

¹⁵⁵ Ephraim Blaine to Governor George Clinton, August 9, 1780, in *State of New York Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 92.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Samuel Huntington, “Act of Congress, October 16, 1780” in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, vol. 18, September 7—December 29, 1780, ed. Gaillard Hunt (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 928.

¹⁵⁸ Goose Van Schaick to Governor George Clinton, July 28, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 62.

foodstuffs to keep the fort supplied.¹⁵⁹ What would make this even more difficult were the orders from Congress' Board of War to close the Continental Army supply depots at "Schenectady, Schoharra, Johnstown, Fort Plank, [and] Oneida Castle. . . ."¹⁶⁰ Realizing that the closing of these posts would eliminate both the local militia meeting and supply places and all of the supply depots between Albany and Fort Stanwix, Van Schaick opted to supersede these orders and "to continue an Issuing Commissary at each of the following Posts; Schoharra, Fort Plank, & Sacandago."¹⁶¹ Gov. Clinton agreed with Van Schaick and suggested other posts to keep open. These posts would be very important to the residents of the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys in the coming months.

For the 1NY at Fort Stanwix, the boredom, danger, lack of supplies, as well as length of service¹⁶² began to wear on their morale. Van Schaick requested in February 1780 that his men be transferred from Fort Stanwix.¹⁶³ He wrote to Washington

That from the length of Time the Regiment has been Stationed at Fort Schuyler & the Remoteness of the Country, many disadvantages have arisen to the Officers & Soldiers with respect to Cloathing, & other necessaries. I shall therefore with the Officers be happy that the Regiment may be Relieved the Ensuing Spring, if that can be done consistent with the good of the service.¹⁶⁴

Washington replied, promising that the 1NY would be relieved "as soon as the Season and circumstances will admit . . ."¹⁶⁵ While waiting to be relieved, the garrison of Fort Stanwix continued its efforts to defend the Mohawk Valley and New York's western frontiers, although

¹⁵⁹ Governor George Clinton to General George Washington, September 1, 1780, in Franklin B. Hough *The Northern Invasion of October 1780: A Series of Papers Relating to the Expeditions from Canada Under Sir John Johnson and Others Against The Frontiers of New York, Which were Supposed to have Connection with Arnold's Treason* (New York: John B. Moreau, 1866), 74-75.

¹⁶⁰ Commissary General of Issues Charles Stewart to James Gray, Esquire, Deputy Commissary General of Issues in Albany, March 16, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 5, 697.

¹⁶¹ Colonel Goose Van Schaick to Governor George Clinton, May 10, 1780, in *ibid.*, 697.

¹⁶² The service time of the 1NY at Fort Stanwix lasted from December 1778 through September of 1780.

¹⁶³ Egly Jr., *History of the First New York Regiment* 150-151.

¹⁶⁴ Colonel Goose Van Schaick to General George Washington, February 15, 1780, in *ibid.*, 151.

¹⁶⁵ General George Washington to Colonel Goose Van Schaick, March 8, 1780, in *ibid.*

the events that occurred during the spring and summer of 1780 would work to ensure the fort's failure.

The farmers along the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys believed that in 1780 there would finally be peace on the frontiers due to the 1779 Clinton–Sullivan Campaign against the Iroquois. The frontier residents also were encouraged by the prospect of a good crop harvest in 1780 after the crop failures of 1779 and recent severe winter. But, they would yet again be subjected to repeated raids and bloodshed beginning in early 1780. Throughout the year, Mohawk Valley residents continued to beg for more Continental troops to be sent to the area. Yet, while the people asked for more troops, the INY remained untouched in Fort Stanwix, thirty miles—a two to three day march—away from the nearest settlements they defended. This left the garrison unable to assist the settlers during the raids. The first large scale incursion occurred in May, when Sir John Johnson struck the village of Caughnawaga and the surrounding area from Tribes Hill west through the Sand Flats.

In Tryon County, large numbers of loyalists still resided in the town of Johnstown. In the spring of 1780, county officials decided that all military aged men in the settlement would be forced into the county militia or sent to prison.¹⁶⁶ Hearing of this from one of his spies, the British governor of Canada, General Sir Frederick Haldimand ordered Sir John Johnson to bring the loyalists to Canada.¹⁶⁷ Haldimand wrote to a Captain Fraser:

Having thought it expedient for His Majesty's Service to Detach a Considerable Party, composed of Regulars, Provincials, and Indians under the command of Sir John Johnson, in order to Distress the Enemy, and to give the persecuted Loyalists an opportunity to escape to this Provisce you will please to consider in which way you can best contribute to his assistance by a cooperateing Party of Indians from your post (and Troops if you judge necessary and can spare them).¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Watt, *The Burning of the Valleys*, 75.

¹⁶⁷ Mary Beacock Fryer, *King's Men: The Soldier Founders of Ontario* (Toronto: Dundurn Press Limited, 1980), 90.

¹⁶⁸ Sir Frederick Haldimand to Captain Fraser, April 17, 1780, in File *HF145-D-5* Montgomery County Department of History and Archives, Fonda, New York.

Johnson's expedition left for Johnstown on May 3, travelling down Lake Champlain to Crown Point, and from there southwest through the Adirondack Mountains, arriving at Johnson Hall, his home in Johnstown, on May 21. Once there, he divided his 528 men into two parties in order to maximize the effectiveness of his raid. One party consisted mainly of Indians and marched east to burn Tribes Hill, while Johnson led the remainder to lay waste to Caughnawaga.¹⁶⁹ Later, after the two groups reunited at Caughnawaga, Johnson's force headed west, burning its way toward Anthony's Nose before returning to Johnson Hall.¹⁷⁰ Johnson also wanted to burn Stone Arabia on this raid, but his Indians were against it, due to the fatigued condition of the expedition, and because the settlers escaped to the local forts with their goods, leaving no scalps or plunder.¹⁷¹

Immediately upon hearing of the raid, the local militia began gathering to try to stop Johnson's force.¹⁷² Colonel Morgan Lewis reported "They [the enemy] shew a Disposition, 'tis said, to fight; and the Militia under Colonels Wemple and Harper consisting of about four hundred & fifty are determined to fight them. The Militia of this Place are moving on, but I am afraid will be too late for action."¹⁷³ Van Schaick was sent to Fort Hunter to collect the militia and attack Johnson's force, but he was unable due to the slow gathering of the militia. Insufficient provisions and loyalists spreading rumors of other incoming raids also hampered Van Schaick's force.¹⁷⁴ Johnson's force successfully avoided the militia and New York Levies that chased it toward Crown Point. Johnson's force, plus prisoners, plunder, and many loyalist families, arrived in Canada. Sir John wrote in his official report that

¹⁶⁹ Earle Thomas, *Sir John Johnson: Loyalist Baronet* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1986), 85-87.

¹⁷⁰ Thomas Sammons, "A Transcription of The Thomas Sammons Papers," in File *HF167-I-4* Montgomery County Department of History and Archives, Fonda, New York.

¹⁷¹ Fryer, *King's Men*, 94.

¹⁷² Colonel John Harper to Colonel Goose Van Schaick, May 22, 1780, in Johnson, *The Bloodied Mohawk*, 23-24.

¹⁷³ Colonel Morgan Lewis to Governor George Clinton, May 23, 1780, in *ibid.*, 26. [Brackets Mine].

¹⁷⁴ Colonel Goose Van Schaick to Governor George Clinton, May 27, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 5, 761-762.

. . . the number of houses Barns Mills & Burnt amount to about one hundred twenty— . . . Vast Quantities of flour Bread Indian Corn and other Provisions were burnt in the houses and Mills, and a great Number of Arms Cash & many Cattle were killed and about Seventy horses brought off One Hundred and forty three Loyalists and a number of Women and Children with about thirty Blacks Male and female came off with us— . . .¹⁷⁵

Johnson's May 22 raid was a complete success. Johnson, by entering the Mohawk Valley from the north and east, rather than from the west, completely nullified any hope that Fort Stanwix could prevent the raid. Due to the distance between Fort Stanwix and Caughnawaga, the garrison of the fort was unable to assist in the defense against this raid.

Johnson reported to Haldimand about the upcoming fall wheat harvest in the Mohawk Valley and how good it was going to be. He would return in the fall to destroy Stone Arabia and the region's harvested crops. In July, Gov. Clinton received this information about the upcoming Tryon County fall grain harvest from Abraham Yates.

I am informed that the enemy of late have with small parties burned the evacuated Houses in the upper parts of Tryon County and that we have not men sufficient to drive them off but are obliged to keep in their little forts; if so, how will they get in their Harvest (the best that ever was in this County); if it is in, how will they preserve it from being destroy'd (I don't mean the whole, some part must go); I could wish that some measure could be fallen upon to save it.¹⁷⁶

Through information given by captured Loyalists, New York State officials realized the wheat and grain harvest in the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys, if not protected properly, would be destroyed. This would effectively prevent New York from filling its quota of supplies for the Continental Army.¹⁷⁷

In May 1780, Van Schaick heard rumors that the British planned to attack Fort Stanwix again. This report came from militiamen who had recently escaped from captivity in Montreal. These men received word of this when their prison guards told them in great detail

¹⁷⁵ Sir John Johnson, "June 3, 1780 Official Report," in Johnson, *The Bloodied Mohawk*, 27-28.

¹⁷⁶ Abraham Yates to Governor George Clinton, July 20, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 35.

¹⁷⁷ The Commissioners for Conspiracies to Governor George Clinton, July 20, 1780, in *ibid.*, 43-45.

about the British preparations for this upcoming attack. Ebenezer Clark and John Barns wrote, “William Woodworth, . . . says that during his Confinement several Hessians of his Guard . . . told him, that on the 15th of this Instant 5000 Indians, Regulars, & Tories were to set out from Montreal in order to attack Fort Stanwix . . .”¹⁷⁸ This information, while false, led to increased concerns about the status and safety of Fort Stanwix’s garrison.

Meanwhile, the 1NY still waited to be relieved from duty. On May 19, Washington wrote to Van Schaick that the 1NY would soon be relieved by “a sufficient number of the 800 Militia to be taken into Continental pay for the defence of the Frontier,”¹⁷⁹ Washington continued, “I have proposed that Colo. [Lt. Col.] Van Dyck shall remain in command, retaining one or two Commissioned and a few good non Commissioned Officers to assist him.”¹⁸⁰ Five days later Washington changed his mind, writing to Van Schaick that “I have determined not to draw your Regt. From Fort Schuyler, and I cannot but hope that by their remaining there, and the cover which will be afforded by the 800 Militia when embodied and properly disposed, the people will be encouraged to stay at home and give occasional succor.”¹⁸¹ As the 1NY continued to garrison Fort Stanwix in 1780, there were increasing numbers of desertions due to the constant deficiencies of pay, food, clothing, and shoes. These contributed to the desertion of thirty-one men from the garrison on May 22, with the intention of joining the British at Fort

¹⁷⁸ Ebenezer Clark and John Barns to Colonel Goose Van Schaick, May 17, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 5, 720.

¹⁷⁹ General George Washington to Colonel Goose Van Schaick, May 19, 1780, in Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, vol. 18 http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=23057962&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+18:+To+COLONEL+GOOSE+VAN+SCHAICK&query=Fort+Schuyler&_ = (accessed October 26, 2010). [Brackets Mine].

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ General George Washington to Colonel Goose Van Schaick, May 24, 1780, in *ibid.*

http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=23101497&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+18:+To+COLONEL+GOOSE+VAN+SCHAICK&query=Fort+Schuyler&_ = (accessed on October 26, 2010).

Oswegatchie.¹⁸² Van Dyck sent Lieutenant Abraham Hardenbergh of the 1NY and forty Oneida Indians to capture the deserters. Once the Indians and Hardenbergh caught up to them at the Grand River, the sixteen deserters who had not yet crossed the river opened fire. The Oneidas returned fire and killed thirteen of the deserters and captured three, before they returned to Fort Stanwix.¹⁸³

The desertions and Johnson's May 1780 raid placed Fort Stanwix on high priority for supplies.¹⁸⁴ On June 6, Brig. Gen. James Clinton ordered Col. Peter Gansevoort's 3NY to guard a train of provisions from Fort Plank to Fort Stanwix.¹⁸⁵ His orders stated that, "it is absolutely necessary that you should pay the strictest attention to prevent Surprise and in Case of an Attack, to defend the Stores to the last Extremity—the present Situation of the Garrison points out the absolute necessity of this Caution."¹⁸⁶ The problems keeping Fort Stanwix provisioned continued throughout the late spring and early summer of 1780. During this period, Washington repeatedly ordered provisions and clothing sent to Stanwix lest the fort fall due to a lack of supplies.¹⁸⁷

Washington wrote,

The security of the Western part of the State of New York depends so absolutely upon holding the post of Fort Schuyler, that I shall not be easy until I have thrown a handsome supply of provision into it. You will therefore be pleased instantly to send up one hundred Barrels of Flour to Albany addressed to Colonel Van Schaick, who will forward it, and . . . one hundred Barrels of Beef . . . This will be wanted for the Garrison at the fort also, and must therefore be of sound and good quality.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸² Egly Jr., *History of the First New York Regiment*, 154-157.

¹⁸³ John A. Nagy, *Rebellion in the Ranks: Mutinies of the American Revolution* (Yardley, Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2008), 47-48.

¹⁸⁴ Brigadier General James Clinton to Colonel Peter Gansevoort, June 6, 1780, in Johnson, *The Bloodied Mohawk*, 28-29.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 29.

¹⁸⁷ Nagy, *Rebellion in the Ranks*, 47-48.

¹⁸⁸ General George Washington to Major General Robert Howe, June 20, 1780, in Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, vol. 19, 41. <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=23527391&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+19:+To+MAJOR+GENERAL+ROBERT+HOWE&query=Fort+Schuyler&id=> = (accessed on October 27, 2010).

Despite the major efforts undertaken by the Continental Army to keep the fort supplied, there was never enough of anything to keep the garrison's morale up. These problems would only worsen during the summer, when the anger of the British-allied Iroquois nations against the Oneidas for allying themselves with the Americans manifested itself.

The Oneidas worried about their safety after Iroquois refugees living with them moved to Niagara. These refugees claimed that the Oneida villages would soon be destroyed.¹⁸⁹ On June 18, several Oneida Sachems arrived at Fort Stanwix and gave a proclamation on their tribe's situation. "Brother, we are in great Consternation. . . yesterday the last of the Kanaghserages and Onondagos left us & say that our Town must be destroyed to open the road to the Mohawk River so far as Schenectady or Albany."¹⁹⁰ The Oneida Sachems said that after escorting their women and children east toward the American settlements where they would be safer, the warriors would return to Stanwix.¹⁹¹ They were too late in leaving. On June 24 and 25, two war parties of Indians and Loyalists arrived at Old Oneida to convince the Oneidas to join the British. Many of the Oneidas agreed to join the British at Niagara, but only if their imprisoned chiefs, Skenandon and Good Peter, were allowed to return to gather their families.¹⁹²

Most of the Oneidas at the other villages decided not to go to Niagara. These Indians reported the events that occurred at Old Oneida to Reverend Samuel Kirkland the American Indian Agent at Fort Stanwix. Kirkland recorded the information he received about the enemy plans to besiege Fort Stanwix and to force the Oneidas to go to Niagara, using the captive chiefs as hostages to ensure compliance.¹⁹³ On July 11, Joseph Brant, Skenandon, Good Peter and more

¹⁸⁹ Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 233-234.

¹⁹⁰ Colonel Goose Van Schaick to Governor George Clinton, June 24, 1780, in Johnson, *The Bloodied Mohawk*, 29.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 234-235.

¹⁹³ Reverend Samuel Kirkland to Volkert P. Douw, July 3, 1780, in Maryly B. Penrose, *Indian Affairs Papers: American Revolution* (Franklin Park, New Jersey: Liberty Bell Associates, 1981), 259.

than 300 Indians and Tories left Niagara for the Oneida villages. Brant reached Kanonwalohale and other Oneida villages on July 26, and destroyed them. The pro-American Oneidas fled to Fort Stanwix prior to Brant's arrival. Brant's force went to Fort Stanwix and tried to convince the Oneidas outside the fort to join the British at Niagara. Most of the Oneida who complied with his demands were women, children, and elderly, as most of the warriors fled into Fort Stanwix. After this, Brant's force traded fire with Stanwix's garrison for about a day before leaving.¹⁹⁴

During all this, Fort Stanwix was yet again short of supplies. Major John Graham of the 1NY stated, "previous to this I sent Cap'n Hicks with sixty men & fifty Oneida warriors to guard up the boats from Fort Herkamer. The situation of the garrison obliged me to take this step, as I was informed by express that Capt. V Renselaer could not proceed for want of a Guard."¹⁹⁵ Throughout that summer, Van Schaick, despite his exertions, had been unable to get enough provisions into Fort Stanwix, and the garrison was forced to live "from hand to mouth."¹⁹⁶ Van Schaick went on to say, "Altho I shall leave no means untried to have the Garrison of Fort Schuyler supplied, it is at present out of my power to promise that I shall be able to accomplish it. Provisions and men to guard them up are wanted."¹⁹⁷ Finding men to guard supply convoys was a recurring problem throughout the war, but it became acute in 1780. This was especially true after Brant's August 2 destruction of the Canajoharie District.

The garrison of Fort Stanwix also faced acute deficiencies in ammunition. Gen. Washington ordered Lt. Col. Udney Hay to:

provide the means of transporting powder and Ball and Cartridge paper to the amount of one hundred thousand rounds to Albany. . . . The critical situation of Fort

¹⁹⁴ Joseph T. Glatthaar and James Kirby Martin, *Forgotten Allies: The Oneida Indians and the American Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 269-271.

¹⁹⁵ Major John Graham to Colonel Goose Van Schaick, July 27, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 59.

¹⁹⁶ Colonel Goose Van Schaick to Governor George Clinton, July 28, 1780, in *ibid.*, 62.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Schuyler renders a speedy relief necessary. Men will be ready for the purpose, but there is not a sufficiency of Ammunition at Albany. . . . They are to be delivered to Mr. Van Rensselaer Commy of Military Stores at Albany.¹⁹⁸

The destruction of the Oneida villages led to the vast majority of the Oneidas moving east from Fort Stanwix to Schenectady. This removed Fort Stanwix's most reliable source of intelligence on enemy activities in the area. This, combined with the constant threat of attack and the lack of supplies, helped to create a nearly untenable situation.

After leaving Fort Stanwix, Brant's force marched on August 2 into Tryon County, where it destroyed the Canajoharie and the surrounding district.¹⁹⁹ This attack occurred soon after the local militia left to guard a supply train on its way to Fort Stanwix. Lt. Col. Samuel Clyde described the events surrounding the raid.

. . . this affir hapend at a verry onfourtnat Hour, when all the Militia of the County was Called up to Fort Schuyler, to guard nine Battows about half Loded. It was said the Enemy intended to cut of on their Pasidge; there was schers a man left that was abel to go, that it seems as every thing Conspaired for our Destruction; In this quarter one holl District allmost Destriod and the best Rejmt. Of Militia her rendrad unable to help themselves or the Publick. . . [sic].²⁰⁰

This raid led to the Tryon County Militia's unwillingness to escort convoys of provisions to Fort Stanwix. The men did not want to leave their families and homes defenseless in the face of an enemy attack again.

During Brant's raid, the party of Indians sent to capture Fort Plank retreated when fired on by those inside of the fort, and Brant's force left upon the arrival of the militia. The men returned home when they saw the smoke from the burning buildings. British Lieutenant Joseph

¹⁹⁸ General George Washington to Lieutenant Colonel Udny Hay, July 31, 1780, in Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, vol. 19, 288-289. http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=24089028&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+19:+To+LIEUTENANT+COLONEL+UDNY+HAY&query=Fort+Schuyler&_ = (accessed on October 27, 2010).

¹⁹⁹ Nester, *The Frontier War of American Independence*, 279.

²⁰⁰ Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Clyde to Governor George Clinton, August 8, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 89.

Clements wrote, “The extent of the settlement destroyed was in length on the Mohawk River above 6 miles and above 4 in breadth and contained above 100 houses, two mills, 1 Church and 2 Forts – They took and killed 300 head of Black Cattle – 200 Horses. Besides Sheep, hogs, poultry & a Considerable quantity of grain of different kinds. The Number of Killed and Prisoners amounts to above 45.”²⁰¹ This destructive raid highlighted the inability of Fort Stanwix to stop these highly motivated Indian and Loyalist raiding parties. It also demonstrated the need to reinforce the New York frontier garrisons. This reinforcement was a necessity in order to guard supply trains to Fort Stanwix, so the militia could protect their families and harvest their crops.

Throughout the summer of 1780, the officials and residents of the Mohawk Valley continued to call for reinforcements to ease the burden on the Tryon County Militia in defending their harvests and homes during the fall.²⁰² The Commissioners of Conspiracies in the State of New York also called for reinforcements in their report.²⁰³

... We are led to believe that the Enemy have it in view to (and will if possible), destroy all the grain to the Northward & Westward, a measure which is carried into Execution will certainly greatly distress us; we would therefore, suggest the necessity of sending a strong Party to the Westward for the Purpose of aiding the Inhabitants in gathering the grain, threshing the same, and bringing it down to a Place of Safety. The Crops are so great they are not able of themselves to gather them and perform the Duties the Country requires.²⁰⁴

The citizens of Tryon County called for reinforcements when they realized that their grain harvests would likely encourage destructive raids. Washington ordered 500 Massachusetts

²⁰¹ Lieutenant Joseph Clements, “August 14, 1780 Report,” in Johnson, *The Bloodied Mohawk*, 41-42.

²⁰² Colonel Peter Vroman and others to Governor George Clinton, July 24, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 53-54.

²⁰³ On July 20, 1780, the Commissioners of Conspiracies in the State of New York interrogated Peter Van Campen. This investigation occurred because his son-in-law was a known loyalist soldier, and had recently stayed at Van Campen’s house for an extended period. In this interrogation, Van Campen gave the commissioners a large amount of information that he received from his son-in-law on upcoming enemy plans set for the fall of that year.

²⁰⁴ The Commissioners of Conspiracies in the State of New York to Governor George Clinton, July 20, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 44.

Levies to head west to Tryon County and told their commander, “As Fort Schuyler is probably invested by this time it is of the utmost Importance that these troops should be expedited without a moment’s delay. . .”²⁰⁵ The 500 Massachusetts Levies, commanded by Colonel John Brown, arrived in Tryon County in early August and garrisoned several of the major forts along the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys.²⁰⁶

Brown’s Levies guarded the shipments of supplies sent to Fort Schuyler. They also worked other missions in the defense of Tryon County. General Robert Van Rensselaer wrote “On Saturday last, I sent of Twelve Boats with Provision for Fort Schuyler, Escorted by two hundred Men under the Command of Collo. Brown, of the Massechutsets Levies, which leaves the Frontiers verry thin of Men. I have also sent out a scout to Unedilla and Ocquage, at which places I am suspicious they make their Rendevouz.”²⁰⁷ The arrival of Brown’s men allowed the militia to stay closer to their homes and gather their grain harvests in relative safety.

During the events of July and August in the Mohawk Valley and at Fort Stanwix, the low morale of the 1NY was still a major issue. The fort’s isolation exacerbated the effects of the threat of enemy attack, lack of supplies, and the duration of service. Washington, alarmed by the discontent of Stanwix’s garrison, ordered Colonel William Malcom²⁰⁸ to send the New York (NY) Levies to relieve them on August 28.²⁰⁹ Washington wrote to Col. Van Schaick concerning the coming relief for his regiment, “I am induced to order Col Malcolm with the levies under his

²⁰⁵ George Washington to Massachusetts Levies, July 31, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 68.

²⁰⁶ Governor George Clinton, “August 11, 1780, General Orders,” in *ibid.*, 97.

²⁰⁷ Brigadier General Robert Van Rensselaer to Governor George Clinton, September 4, 1780, in Johnson, *The Bloodied Mohawk*, 55.

²⁰⁸ Colonel Malcom’s name is spelled Malcolm in some sources. Since most sources, including Col. Malcom’s own writings omit the second “L.” I will use the spelling Malcom unless quoted as such.

²⁰⁹ General George Washington to Governor George Clinton, August 28, 1780, in Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, vol. 19, 457-458. http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=24462970&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+19:+To+GOVERNOR+GEORGE+CLINTON&query=Fort+Schuyler&_ = (accessed on October 28, 2010).

command to proceed to the frontier. One of the objects for sending him will be to relieve the garrison of Fort Schuyler. You will therefore put your regiment under marching orders and when the relief arrives will march it to join the army.”²¹⁰The 1NY left Fort Stanwix in late September.

After the raids of Johnson in May and Brant in August, rumors and reports spread of a planned invasion to destroy Stone Arabia.²¹¹ Lewis Morris reported this news to Gov. Clinton. “We have just received an Express from Tryon County . . . that Sir John Johnston [sic] has sent a party into Johnstown, to inform the Inhabitants that he is coming on with 2000 men, and intends making his first stroke at Stone Arabia.”²¹² When interrogated, suspected loyalists told New York State officials that the British desired to destroy the grain harvest in order to prevent its use by the Continental Army. Peter Van Campen gave state officials the following information he received from his loyalist son-in-law. “Parties would come down the Mohawk and North Rivers immediately after the Harvest was gathered, to destroy the grain which would effectually knock up our Army, as they had Information that Provisions were very scarce here and that the Crops below were very bad.”²¹³ Johnson would attack Tryon County in October, leaving a swath of destruction in his wake.

Fort Stanwix was unable to successfully defend the western frontiers of New York against the 1780 raids. Its isolated position at the head of navigation of the Mohawk River left its garrison completely unable to counter the raid of Sir John Johnson on May 22. This raid struck from the north and destroyed the area between Tribes Hill and Anthony’s Nose. The fort’s

²¹⁰ General George Washington to Colonel Goose Van Schaick, July 28, 1780, in Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, vol. 19, 459-460.

<http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/of2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=24467583&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+19:+To+COLONEL+GOOSE+VAN+SCHAICK&query=Fort+Schuyler& => (accessed on October 28, 2010).

²¹¹ Lewis R. Morris to Governor George Clinton, August 24, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 136-137.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 136.

²¹³ Extract of Peter Van Campen’s Examination, July 20, 1780, in *ibid.*, 44-45.

garrison was unable to adequately protect the Oneida towns from Joseph Brant's raid in July. After Brant drove the Oneidas from their villages, Fort Stanwix lost much of its intelligence assets, as the Oneidas had previously reported on the movements of raiding parties to the commandant at Stanwix. With this raid the garrison of Stanwix had the best chance to prevent an attack on the Mohawk Valley, and it failed miserably. Fort Stanwix, by not stopping Brant, missed an opportunity to prevent the August 2 destruction of the Canajoharie District. At this point Fort Stanwix, now completely blind, became a liability to the Continental Army.

Chapter Three:

The Events of Fall 1780 – Spring 1781, Fort Stanwix Continued to Drain Continental Army Supplies and Manpower Until the End.

After Joseph Brant's destruction of the Oneida villages in July, Fort Stanwix became further isolated. Its standing at the very western edge of the frontier led to the ease with which the enemy could constantly harass its garrisons. This position prevented the fort from stopping raids through the enemy's ability to attack the Mohawk Valley at will. This was especially true after the Oneidas were driven from their villages in July 1780. The raid of Sir John Johnson in October ensured Stanwix's continued drain on Continental Army supply depots. This occurred through Johnson's destruction of the grain harvests in the Schoharie and Mohawk Valleys. These all made Fort Stanwix a nearly untenable position costing the Continental Army a tremendous amount just to keep supplied. This led to Col. William Malcom's rejected call for the demolition of Fort Stanwix in favor of a new post about thirty miles to the east prior to Johnson's raid in October.

In September 1780 Col. Malcom, the acting Commander of the Northern Department repeatedly asked that Lieutenant Colonel Albert Pawling be sent to take command of Fort Stanwix.²¹⁴ Col. Brown of the Massachusetts Levies informed Malcom of the poor discipline in Col. John Harper's regiment. Malcom stated that "Co'l Brown . . . informs me that some Companys of Harpurs have mutinyed on receiving the orders of march and that the officers are the Abbettors — not being willing to leave particular places—and he gives it as his Opinion that they are not a Corps to be trusted in the Garrison"²¹⁵ In order to reform Harper's regiment prior

²¹⁴ Colonel William Malcom to Governor George Clinton, September 14, 1780, in *Letters Composed by Colonel William Malcom*, http://www.fort-plank.com/William_Malcoms_Letters.html (accessed on October 28, 2010).

²¹⁵ Colonel William Malcom to Governor George Clinton, September 16, 1780, in *ibid.* (accessed on October 31, 2010).

to its going into garrison at Stanwix, he placed Major James Hughes and other good officers in the unit to make it battle ready.²¹⁶ Malcom also sent Harper away on furlough.

The change in officers improved the unit until the men heard that Johnson's raid was approaching the Mohawk Valley in October 1780. The same old concerns about supplies and provisions continued. However, Col. Malcom had a new concern, the lack of sufficient manpower to be a strong garrison.

We shall not have 9 months men enough to form the Garrison — not more than 200 as far as I can yet find out . . . I wish the General would send up a small Conl [sic] Regiment — but I rather think he Trusts to the State for the Frontiers & also the Garrison of fort Scuyler . . . I am now pretty well convinced that the Country may be kept Quiet with good management, & few good Troops. . . .²¹⁷

Despite his attempts to gather more men, the NY Levies under Maj. Hughes would be the total garrison serving at Fort Stanwix until relieved in November. Throughout the fall of 1780, Col. Malcom worked to try to keep the garrisons of Fort Stanwix and the other forts in the Northern Department supplied. Col. Malcom and his men, while guarding a supply convoy to Fort Stanwix, attacked and routed a small force of Indians that sought to ambush them. Governor Clinton wrote that “Our friend Malcom on his Way with a Part of the Levies of this State to relieve the Garrison of Fort Schuyler, fell in with, charged & routed a Party of the Savages. They left two Dead on the ground about thirty Blanketts Kettles &”²¹⁸

Sir Frederick Haldimand, the British Governor of Canada, learned through his spies, and the reports of members of the Johnson and Brant raids, that a bumper crop of grain was expected in the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys. Haldimand decided in September to send another

²¹⁶ Colonel William Malcom to Governor George Clinton, September 25, 1780, in *Letters Composed by Colonel William Malcom*, http://www.fort-plank.com/William_Malcoms_Letters.html (accessed on November 20, 2010).

²¹⁷ Colonel William Malcom to Governor George Clinton, September 16, 1780, in *ibid.* (accessed on October 28, 2010).

²¹⁸ Governor George Clinton to John Morin Scott, October 9, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 285.

expedition under Sir John against Tryon County with the objective of destroying the harvest.²¹⁹ Haldimand told Johnson that “This is a Critical period to detach Troops but to effect so essential a Service, I would risk it. I must therefore desire you will by the next Post give me your ideas upon the most Eligible means to carry it into immediate Execution, for if it is to be done there is no time to lose as the Corn . . . will be hurried away the moment it is fit to Transport.”²²⁰ Johnson already planned for this and wrote back to Haldimand that his goal was “to remove, or Cut them off, as well as to destroy the vast Crops of Grain, by this time housed, in every part of the County.”²²¹ Although there was tremendous amount of risk involved in an expedition this late in the year, Johnson replied, ”I do it with great Chearfulness.”²²² Johnson then prepared to meet his force of 780 men at Oswego.

Johnson planned to have more men, but sickness at Fort Niagara forced many to remain behind. Johnson and Haldimand tried and failed to keep the expedition a secret. Meanwhile, the expedition could not leave Oswego until October 1 due to the men who could join Johnson from Niagara being delayed in a storm. On October 5, Johnson’s men hid their boats near the east end of Onondaga Lake and began the long march toward the Schoharie Valley.²²³ While en route, Johnson received disheartening news from four prisoners, that despite all the secrecy surrounding his expedition, the Americans knew he was coming. They did not, however, know the direction of his approach.²²⁴ Soon after the capture of the prisoners, an Oneida Indian deserted Johnson’s expedition and travelled to Fort Stanwix where, with a mortar shell as

²¹⁹ Governor Sir Frederick Haldimand to Lieutenant Colonel Mason Bolton, August 31, 1780, in Smy, *The Butler Papers*, vol. BR1780, 40.

²²⁰ Sir Frederick Haldimand to Sir John Johnson, August 24, 1780, in Watt, *The Burning of the Valleys*, 157.

²²¹ Sir John Johnson to Governor Sir Frederick Haldimand, August 28, 1780, in Thomas, *Sir John Johnson*, 88.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Thomas, *Sir John Johnson*, 90.

²²⁴ Watt, *The Burning of the Valleys*, 165-166.

evidence, he alerted the Americans to the intended targets of the coming raid.²²⁵ The fort's garrison passed this important intelligence on the raid to Col. Malcom in Albany. At this time, the men of Stanwix's garrison told their officers that they would surrender if Johnson's force approached the fort.

After he learned of the direction and targets of Johnson's expedition, Malcom sent the information to Brig. Gen. Robert Van Rensselaer, who commanded the Albany County Militia. Malcom ordered him to call out his militia and to send supplies for the gathering troops.²²⁶ Although Van Rensselaer originally received orders to call up 800 men, he decided to call out his entire militia brigade instead. Gov. Clinton replied to a letter from Van Rensselaer on this subject. "I . . . approve your ordering out your whole brigade. My orders of yesterday were for 800, but those of this morning were for your whole brigade. . . . hasten them on with all possible speed, and take with them all the provisions that can be collected."²²⁷ Unfortunately, the provisions that Van Rensselaer was able to collect for the campaign were scanty at best.

Johnson's expedition was now in a race against time, as they continued their march toward the Schoharie. While on the march, a group of Seneca Indians captured a party of six American scouts. These men gave Johnson specific information about the garrisons of the forts in the Schoharie Valley. Using the captured scouts as guides, Johnson's expedition reached the Schoharie Creek on October 16th, where they made camp. On the morning of October 17, Johnson's men marched north past the Upper Fort.²²⁸ But a militiaman out driving loose cattle into the fort saw the rear of Johnson's expedition and raised the alarm.²²⁹ When Johnson heard

²²⁵ Stephen Lush to Governor George Clinton, October 12, 1780, in Hough, *The Northern Invasion of October 1780*, 89.

²²⁶ Colonel William Malcom to Brigadier General Robert Van Rensselaer, October 13, 1780, in *ibid.*, 93-94.

²²⁷ Governor George Clinton to Brigadier General Robert Van Rensselaer, October 14, 1780, in *ibid.*, 95.

²²⁸ Upper Fort was the southernmost fort in the Schoharie Valley. The Schoharie Creek flows north into the Mohawk River, making Upper Fort the furthest upstream.

²²⁹ Johnson, *The Bloodied Mohawk*, 57.

the alarm, he gave an order for his men to plunder and burn their way north through the Schoharie Valley. Johnson next attempted to capture Middle Fort,²³⁰ but discovered that his small artillery piece and mortars were ineffective. Three times Johnson sent a white flag demanding the fort's surrender. Each time the garrison fired on the flag.²³¹ Johnson's men burned everything outside of a fifty yard radius of the fort, and late in the afternoon moved on to the north.²³² After reaching the Lower Fort,²³³ Johnson's artillerymen fired a couple of cannon shots into the church tower, but otherwise left the fort alone. His men satisfied themselves with killing and burning anything outside of a fifty yard radius of the fort. Johnson's men encamped for the night, a few miles downstream from the Lower Fort.

At the same time that Johnson's force burned its way down the Schoharie toward the Mohawk, General Robert Van Rensselaer worked tirelessly to gather a force to defeat Johnson.

Van Rensselaer wrote to Gov. Clinton,

I shall in an Hour or two, as nearly as I can estimate, have between 6 and 700 Men: fifteen Head of Cattle intended for Fort Schuyler arrived here yesterday. I have ordered six to be killed this Morning to victual the Troops for two Days, and as I shall in all probability be necessitated to make use of the Rest and want an additional Number . . . I shall immediate march to Fort Hunter and upon my Arrival take such Measures as Circumstances will admit of to intercept the enemy's Retreat.²³⁴

On October 18, while Van Rensselaer gathered men and supplies, Johnson's men marched north to Fort Hunter at the confluence of the Schoharie Creek and the Mohawk River. At Fort Hunter, Johnson split his force into two parties that would destroy everything along both banks of the

²³⁰ Middle Fort was near the current town of Middleburgh, New York. This work was the next fortification downstream from Upper Fort.

²³¹ James A. Roberts, ed. "Raid of Sir John Johnson, or the Schoharie and Mohawk Valleys, in October, 1780," in *New York in the Revolution as Colony and State* (Albany, New York: 1897), xiv.

²³² Thomas, *Sir John Johnson*, 91.

²³³ The Lower Fort consisted of a stone church inside a stockade fence. This fortification was near the current city of Schoharie, New York. The church, minus the stockade, still exists today as part of the Old Stone Fort Museum.

²³⁴ Brigadier General Robert Van Rensselaer to Governor George Clinton, October 18, 1780, in File *HF167-I-2* Montgomery County Department of History and Archives, Fonda, New York.

Mohawk west to Anthony's Nose. Meanwhile, Gen. Van Rensselaer's militia marched west to stop Johnson. Major J. Lansing wrote the following from the drive to stop Johnson.

This Moment General Rensselaer is advised by express, that the enemy are burning the country in the Neighbourhood of Fort Hunter. Their Force could not be ascertained when the Man came away. Genl. Rensselaer intends to push on by Moon Light, as soon as he possibly can; perhaps your Excellency may deem it advisable to order the Militia now at Schenecyady to march up. . . .”²³⁵

Johnson's men reached Anthony's Nose²³⁶ at about midnight on October 19, where they encamped for the night separated on opposite banks of the Mohawk River.

After delivering the information of Johnson's coming raid to Albany on October 13 (three days before the enemy reached the Schoharie Valley), the garrison of Fort Stanwix did nothing. It did not attempt to come to the aid of the settlements downriver although they had several days to get into position. This was inexcusable as the mission of the garrison of Fort Stanwix was to defend the Mohawk Valley. By not assisting the Levies and militia in the Mohawk Valley in stopping the enemy at the Noses, the garrison missed an opportunity to possibly defeat Johnson's exhausted force. At very least the Levies and militia could have halted Johnson until Van Rensselaer attacked him from the rear. The cooperation of all the military units in the Mohawk Valley against the enemy would likely have prevented the destruction of the Stone Arabia settlements.

Col. Brown of the Massachusetts Levies received word, at his headquarters in Fort Paris in Stone Arabia, on October 18 from two enemy deserters that Johnson's force was camped on both banks of the Mohawk near the Noses due to exhaustion. Brown decided to attack the next morning with all 360 of his men. By failing to attack the separated party on the north bank of the

²³⁵ Major J. Lansing, Jr. to Governor George Clinton, October 18, 1780, in File *HF167-I-2* Montgomery County Department of History and Archives, Fonda, New York.

²³⁶ Anthony's Nose, or the Noses, is an area where the Mohawk Valley narrows considerably between large hills on either side of the river. Anthony's Nose on the northern bank is now called "Big Nose" while "Little Nose" is on the south bank. This area is east of the town of Palatine, New York.

Mohawk, Brown lost an opportunity to knock out a large portion of Johnson's force. Early the next morning Johnson crossed the Mohawk River, reunited his command, and set up an ambush.²³⁷ Brown and his men were led into the trap by a rider who claimed to carry orders from Van Rensselaer. In the Battle of Stone Arabia, Brown and over thirty levies and militia were killed. The remainder of Brown's battalion fled.

At this time, Van Rensselaer's men marched along the south bank of the Mohawk and arrived within earshot of the battle. While looking for a suitable ford, Van Rensselaer received word of the defeat of Brown. At this time Colonel Lewis Dubois' New York Levies, Lt. Col. Samuel Clyde's Tryon County Militia, and Lt. Col. Louis Atayataghronghtha's fifty Oneida warriors crossed the river. After crossing, they waited impatiently for Van Rensselaer and the rest of the force to join them. The Albany County Militia had fallen behind, and Van Rensselaer wanted them to catch up with his column before crossing the river. After crossing, Van Rensselaer divided his force into three columns so that they would be in battle formation when they met Johnson's force.²³⁸

After defeating Brown, Johnson's men proceeded to destroy the Stone Arabia settlements. Johnson then turned his force west, leaving a swath of destruction from Stone Arabia to Fox's Mills, avoiding any fortified houses along the way.²³⁹ He knew that his column had to move quickly due to the close proximity of Van Rensselaer's forces to his position. Johnson's expedition now began to head west toward their boats in order to return to Oswego. But, Van Rensselaer's men arrived and met Johnson in battle before they could escape. During the Battle of Klock's Field, confusion ruled the day. The late hour that the battle was fought led to the onset of darkness that, when combined with the thick gunsmoke, made it extremely

²³⁷ Johnson, *The Bloodied Mohawk*, 60-63.

²³⁸ Watt, *The Burning of the Valleys*, 212-218.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 209-217.

difficult to distinguish friend from foe. Despite this, Van Rensselaer's right wing broke through Johnson's left and began to work their way into his rear. Soon after this, reports of friendly fire led Van Rensselaer to call back his men. Aided by Van Rensselaer's unexpected retreat and the cover of darkness, Johnson and his men escaped from the battle and headed toward their boats.

After the battle, Gov. Clinton, who now commanded the force pursuing Johnson, sent word to Fort Stanwix to send a party out to destroy Johnson's boats. This was to be done so that the pursuit could capture Johnson before his command could return to Oswego. This attempt failed with the capture of all but two of Captain Walter Vrooman's party due to their carelessness. If successful, the destruction of Johnson's boats would have kept open the possibility that Gov. Clinton's and Van Rensselaer's army could have finished the destruction of the enemy. The failure of this mission squandered a golden opportunity for Fort Stanwix to slow down Johnson's retreat.

Capt. Walter Vrooman's expedition failed nearly from the beginning. This failure highlighted the personnel issues faced by the Fort Stanwix garrison in the fall of 1780. Many of the NY Levies that garrisoned Fort Stanwix in the fall of 1780 were drawn from the regiment of Col. John Harper. His unit had major discipline problems, including insubordination and mutiny.²⁴⁰ Malcom had a very low opinion of Harper, writing that, "I might as well ask Col Harpur about the day of Judgement as about his Regiment — I really have no patience to mention instances of his Unofficer like cond[uc]t."²⁴¹ Malcom stated in an earlier letter that "Gen'l Ranslaer will tell you that Harper is a blockhead."²⁴² These issues led him to place Major

²⁴⁰ Colonel William Malcom to Governor George Clinton, September 16, 1780, in *Letters Composed by Colonel William Malcom* http://www.fort-plank.com/William_Malcoms_Letters.html (accessed on November 19, 2010).

²⁴¹ Colonel William Malcom to Governor George Clinton, September 25, 1780, in *ibid.* (accessed on November 19, 2010).

²⁴² Colonel William Malcom to Governor George Clinton, September 14, 1780, in *ibid.* (accessed on November 19, 2010).

James Hughes in command of the troops going to Fort Stanwix in September 1780 rather than a furloughed Col. Harper. Although these discipline problems existed prior to the NY Levies' service at Fort Stanwix, they became acute as a result of the isolation and insufficient provisions faced at the fort.

The personnel issues continued at Fort Stanwix even with Hughes in command during September and October. After receiving word of Johnson's coming raid, the men of the garrison determined "if they came to attack the place they would not fight, and told their Officers They would lay down their Arms as soon as They [Johnson's force] would make their appearance."²⁴³ While Johnson did not attack, or even go near Stanwix, this threat by the men highlighted the fact that troops despised the rote monotony of service at the post. When the orders from Gov. Clinton arrived to send out a party to destroy Johnson's boats in order to prevent his escape, Hughes sent Capt. Vrooman to lead it. Hughes ordered the party of sixty-one men to "Proceed by the nearest Rout. to . . . gain the Front of the Enemy, retiring to Onondagoa . . . interrupt their March by harassing their Rear, Flank or Front . . . do not expose your Party to surprise, or endanger them by being surrounded . . . you are then with the greatest Expedition to proceed to that Place and destroy all their Boats, Baggage and Provision . . ."²⁴⁴ This was a golden opportunity for Fort Stanwix to help defeat a major raiding party, but it was not to be.

While on the march, one of Vrooman's men claimed he was "sick" and asked to be left behind. After the remainder of the party marched on, the "sick" man walked several miles back toward Fort Stanwix before Johnson's raiders captured him. The man told Johnson everything about the plan to harass his force and to destroy the boats. Johnson sent a force that surrounded Vrooman's command while they were carelessly eating a meal. In the ensuing ambush,

²⁴³ Abraham Fraser to Sir Frederick Haldimand, October 27, 1780, in Johnson, *The Bloodied Mohawk*, 173-174.

²⁴⁴ Major James Hughes to Captain Walter Vrooman, October 22, 1780, in *ibid.*, 73-74.

Johnson's men captured fifty-six, killed two, and two escaped. Gov. Clinton discussed the unverified preliminary reports of this to James Duane. "I am in great Hopes, however, that this Account is not true as the Orders given to the Party by Maj'r Hughes was couched in the most cautious Terms; they were to proceed with the greatest Circumspection & not to hazard and Thing that might endanger their Retreat."²⁴⁵ Vrooman's force through their disobedience of Hughes' orders to remain vigilant in order to avoid capture, cost Fort Stanwix an opportunity to stop, or at least slow down, Johnson's force. The discipline problems that plagued Harper's Levies continued at Fort Stanwix, leading to this failure to capitalize on the intelligence about the whereabouts of Johnson's boats.

Johnson's October 1780 raid devastated Tryon County. Many residents lost everything but their lives. Christopher P. Yates wrote,

I imbrace this first Moment of Leisure to acquaint you that we are all safe and have escaped the Burning — The Enemy crossed at Mort Van Alstines & tru ck off to Stone Arabia . . . they have burned the greates[t] part of Stone Arabia & came out at Waggoners, from there the burning continued up as far as Klocks . . . The Enemy were in our Pasture—we have lost one mare and one Milch Cow killed . . . The Night when the enemy laid at the Nose [October 18] . . . at 12 OClock I got my wife & a. in a Waggon and bro^t them here [Fort Rensselaer] this Morning I sent her back. . .²⁴⁶

The destruction of the harvest had wide reaching repercussions on the army supply issues that in turn made it even more difficult to provision Fort Stanwix. George Washington wrote to Governor Clinton on the effect of the 1780 raids.

The damage, which has been done, will, I fear, be severely felt by the public as well as by individuals. We had the most pleasing prospects of forming considerable Magazines of bread, from the Country which has been laid waste, and which from your Excellency's letter, is so extensive, that I am apprehensive we shall be obliged to bring flour from the Southward to support the troops at and near West Point. You will be pleased to give me your opinion upon the quantity of flour that may yet, with probability, be procured above, in the course of the Winter, that I may form some

²⁴⁵ Governor George Clinton to James Duane, October 29, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 347.

²⁴⁶ Christopher P. Yates to Henry Glen, October 21, 1780, in Johnson, *The Bloodied Mohawk*, 65-66. [Brackets Mine].

calculation of the quantity which it will be necessary to draw from Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.”²⁴⁷

The 1780 raids necessitated the fort’s draining of provisions from Washington’s meager supply depots.

The enemy actions of 1780 on the New York Frontiers ravaged the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys. The large amount of destruction shocked and enraged Continental officers on the scene, such as Colonel Udney Hay, who said that “the whole loss we have sustained is about two hundred dwelling houses, a proportionable number of barns and out houses, with about two hundred thousand bushels of grain of various sorts, and a hundred horses and oxen and about forty men killed and as many perhaps taken Prisoners. . . .”²⁴⁸ The loss of the 1780 harvest alone was devastating but without the farms, equipment, and draft animals necessary to produce future crops, Tryon County’s agricultural output would be crippled for years. This led to reduced available food supplies in New York with which it had to fill its military supply obligations.²⁴⁹

The inability of Fort Stanwix to defend New York’s western frontiers from loyalist and Indian raids in 1780 led to the complete collapse of the State Supply System in New York. New York State had relied on Tryon County’s 1780 wheat and grain crop to fulfill its obligations of food for the army. After the three major raids on the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys, New York did not have the food supplies to fulfill its quota. Gov. Clinton wrote that

the whole of the valuable Settlement of Schoharie & part of the settlement of BallsTown & almost the whole of the Intermediate County on both sides of the Mohawk River from Fort Hunter to Fort Rensselaer at the upper end of Cananojoharie, including the settlement of Stone Arabia are burnt & laid waste; on a moderate Computation we have lost at least 150,000 bush’ls of wheat besides other Grain and

²⁴⁷ General George Washington to Governor George Clinton, November 6, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 384.

²⁴⁸ Colonel Udney Hay to Major General Nathaniel Greene, October 26, 1780, in Richard K. Showman and Dennis M. Conrad, Eds., *The Papers of Nathaniel Greene*, vol. 6, June 1, 1780-December 25, 1780. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 434.

²⁴⁹ Governor George Clinton to President of Congress Samuel Huntington, November 6, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 390.

forage & 200 Dwellings. Schenectady may now be said to become the limits of our western Frontier, the first Object worth a new Enterprize.²⁵⁰

This was a legitimate concern, as there were few places left west of Schenectady in the Mohawk Valley that were not already destroyed. Except for those settlers living in the various forts scattered across the Mohawk Valley, Schenectady was the nearest civilization on the Mohawk River to Fort Stanwix after the 1780 raids.

Fort Stanwix's isolation, low provisions, morale, and the threat of Indian attacks continued to make life miserable for the garrison. Malcom wrote, "I am this moment returned from another excursion . . . The Garrison of Fort Scuyler was in distress by many circumstances — it was absolutely necessary to Support it — With much trouble I have got Wisenfels forwarded to the 1th of Janry. . . ."²⁵¹ Col. Frederick Weissenfels commanded the 4NY and relieved the NY Levies at Fort Stanwix in November of 1780.²⁵² Weissenfels discussed his preparations to relieve Hughes and the Levies. "I schall march to Morrow, with the Provisions I have been able to collect, and do my self the honor of Transmitting the State of the Garrison, by Major Hughes."²⁵³ The 4NY would garrison Fort Stanwix until January 1781 when it was consolidated into the 2NY.

After the raids in the fall of 1780, there was a major push by both New York State and Continental Army officials to get Stanwix resupplied before the winter made the roads impassable and prevented water travel on the Mohawk River. Gov. Clinton worried after the raids that if a proper amount of supplies could not be brought to the fort before winter the post may have to be abandoned.

²⁵⁰ Governor George Clinton to James Duane, October 29, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 346.

²⁵¹ Colonel William Malcom to Governor George Clinton, November 3, 1780, in *Letters Composed by Colonel William Malcom* http://www.fort-plank.com/William_Malcoms_Letters.html (accessed on October 29, 2010).

²⁵² Colonel Frederick Weissenfels to Governor George Clinton, November 15, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 414.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

Colo. Weissenfels march'd to Schenectady where his Regt. Will continue to escort a suff't supply of Provisions to Fort Schuyler, a very inconsiderable Part of which is as yet provided & unless particular attention is paid to this Business (as the Season for water Transportation in the course of a month will be over & will be impossible to forw'd it by Land), the Post must in the course of the winter be abandoned.²⁵⁴

Washington replied that he would send a supply of salted beef to Stanwix as soon as he received it from Connecticut. He ordered the meat sped up, but it had not arrived as of his reply to Clinton.²⁵⁵ Washington wrote to Governor Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut, "I am in hopes that the salted Beef which I requested your Excellency to forward, in my letter of the 28th October has been sent on. Our dependence for a Winter Magazine for Fort Schuyler still rests upon that parcel."²⁵⁶ The Continental Army's supply and transportation problems in late 1780 exacerbated the difficulties faced in keeping Fort Stanwix's garrison fed and clothed.

New York had to scrounge for not only the provisions but also the transportation necessary to resupply Fort Schuyler. Due to the distance between the supply depots and Fort Stanwix and the danger of Indian attack along the route, resupply convoys were infrequent in late 1780 and early 1781. The state and garrison also dealt with corruption that manifested itself in either poor quality supplies or theft of supplies between the depots and Fort Stanwix.

Weissenfels detailed the shortages faced by the garrison and how they were worsened by these actions.

. . . I have taken notice, of a mode, verry Prejudicial to the Safety of this Post, to state

²⁵⁴ Governor George Clinton to General George Washington, October 30, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 354-355.

²⁵⁵ General George Washington to Governor George Clinton, November 5, 1780, in Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, vol. 20 [http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=25339759&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+20:+To+GOVERNOR+GEORGE+CLINTON&query=Fort+Schuyler&_ =](http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=25339759&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+20:+To+GOVERNOR+GEORGE+CLINTON&query=Fort+Schuyler&_=) (accessed on October 30, 2010).

²⁵⁶ General George Washington to Governor Jonathan Trumbull, November 19, 1780, in *ibid.* [http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=25499126&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+20:+To+GOVERNOR+JONATHAN+TRUMBULL&query=Fort+Schuyler&_ =](http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=25499126&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+20:+To+GOVERNOR+JONATHAN+TRUMBULL&query=Fort+Schuyler&_=) (accessed on October 30, 2010).

the Supplies, by superficial Calculations as to both quantity and quality, when they are sent of, from Schenectady, without considering the inevitable Casualties that may happen to them, Witness the 60 Barrels of Flower, destined for Fort Schuyler, which where left at Fort Herkema without guard or direction, who where nearly half consumed, and the Rum half water. I have Experienced the random Calculations . . . that instead of Provisions sufficient for Febr. this month will Finish the whole. . . .²⁵⁷

This type of corruption occurred throughout the war in the Continental Army, but the desperate need of provisions throughout the Mohawk Valley after the 1780 raids led to its increase in the supplies destined for Fort Stanwix.

This led to Washington again taking provisions from his army in order to supply Fort Stanwix. Washington wrote in his diary on May 5, 1781 about his urgency in sending supplies to Fort Schuyler.

Accounts from Brigadr. Genl. Clinton at Albany, . . . filled me with anxious fears that the Garrison of fort Schuyler would be obliged to evacuate the Post for want of Provisions . . . In consequence of this alarming information, I directed the Q. M. Gl. To send 50 Barls. of flour and the like qty. of Salted Meat immy. up for the Garrison of Fort Schuyler – but of the latter there being only 24 in Store, no more could be sent.²⁵⁸

Washington, Gen. Clinton, and other officers continued to forward supplies at great cost of both money and manpower, neither of which they could really afford, to provision Fort Stanwix, a post that repeatedly proved its inability to defend the settlements from enemy raids in 1780.

The low morale and sometimes insubordinate actions of the NY Levies at Fort Stanwix was of great concern to Gov. Clinton, as it was clear that the New York State troops did not want to serve at the isolated frontier post. In his discussion of the October 1780 raid, Clinton wrote that

The Levies incorporated in this Regt. whose Times expire ab't the middle of December, were immediately to march to Fort Herkimer to keep open the

²⁵⁷ Colonel Frederick Weissenfels to Governor George Clinton, December 4, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 466.

²⁵⁸ George Washington, "May 5, 1781 Diary Entry" in *The Diaries of George Washington*, vol. 3, 1771-75, 1780-81 ed. Donald Jackson, and Dorothy Twohig (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1978), 359.

communication of Fort Schuyler with the Country. . . . I could have wished some other Regt. Better provided ag't the severe Climate had been ordered to garrison that Post . . . because the Troops of this State conceive it an hardship constantly to garrison it, this Duty is become extremely disagreeable to them.²⁵⁹

At the time of Gov. Clinton's letter, the NY Levies at Fort Stanwix had barely been in garrison for a month when they began clamoring for relief. In comparison, the 3NY remained in garrison for twenty months²⁶⁰ before being relieved, the 1NY even longer.²⁶¹ Washington stated in his reply

I am very sorry that the troops of your State should look upon it as a hardship to do the Garrison duty of Fort Schuyler. I had always allotted it to them, as thinking it would be agreeable to both Officers and Men to guard their own Frontier, especially when they are not continued an unreasonable time upon the tour. The Frontier posts of Penna. and Virginia have been continuously garrisoned by their own Regs. which have not been relieved these two years. The troops of the line in general are, in point of Cloathing, upon a footing with the rest of the Army, which is very bare, and which has a poor prospect of being well supplied.²⁶²

Washington's placing New York regiments in garrison at Fort Stanwix was consistent with his operations along the Pennsylvania and Virginia frontiers.²⁶³ The garrison of Stanwix, while it faced supply problems, was no worse off than the rest of the Continental Army. Also, at times due to the importance placed on the fort, it received supplies that Washington could ill afford to send. While Stanwix's isolation from settlements and the constant threat of Indian attack undoubtedly had a major effect on the garrison's dislike of the post, this circumstance most

²⁵⁹ Governor George Clinton to General George Washington, October 30, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 355.

²⁶⁰ The 3NY served as garrison between April 1777 and December 1778.

²⁶¹ The 1NY served as garrison between December 1778 and October 1780.

²⁶² General George Washington to Governor George Clinton, November 5, 1780, in Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, vol. 20 [http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=25338525&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+20:+To+GOVERNOR+GEORGE+CLINTON&query=Fort+Schuyler&_ =](http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=25338525&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+20:+To+GOVERNOR+GEORGE+CLINTON&query=Fort+Schuyler&_=) (accessed on October 31, 2010).

²⁶³ Ibid.

likely came from the men not wanting to go to Fort Stanwix in the first place. Col. Malcom discussed this and the consequences of sending short-term troops to Stanwix.²⁶⁴

On December 27, 1780, Lt. Col. Robert Cochran received orders from Gen. James Clinton to escort provisions to Fort Stanwix, and then to relieve Weissenfels, who asked to be relieved prior to the expiration of his commission. Gen. Clinton wrote that, "I have directed Lt. Col. Cochran to take Command of Fort Schuyler, where I have this day sent fifty Barrels of Flower, being all that I could collect. Col. Weissenfels is impatient to be relieved."²⁶⁵ Col. Philip Van Cortlandt would take command in late January 1781, temporarily relieving Cochran, after guarding another supply convoy to Stanwix.²⁶⁶ Throughout the remainder of the time Fort Stanwix was in use supply issues continued to plague the fort's garrison.

Yet until forced to do so, New York State and Continental Army officials refused to allow the garrison to move east to be closer to the settlements they were defending. This was due to the belief that Fort Stanwix was the key to holding the Mohawk Valley and that as long as it held the frontier as well as Schenectady and Albany could be defended from enemy attack. This mindset began with the reconstruction of the fort in 1776 and was strengthened by the defeat of the St. Leger Campaign at Stanwix in 1777. Meanwhile, the events of 1778 and 1780 completely disproved this idea, as the majority of the raids avoided Fort Stanwix, and the fort was powerless to stop the attacks that did come. Regardless, Washington and many other officers held this mindset right up to the abandonment of Fort Stanwix in May 1781.

²⁶⁴ Colonel William Malcom to Governor George Clinton, September 16, 1780, in *Letters Composed by Colonel William Malcom* http://www.fort-plank.com/William_Malcoms_Letters.html (accessed on December 29, 2010).

²⁶⁵ Brigadier General James Clinton to Governor George Clinton, December 27, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 525.

²⁶⁶ Brigadier General James Clinton to Colonel Philip Van Cortlandt, January 17, 1781, in Judd, *Correspondence of the Van Cortlandt Family*, vol. 2, 396-397.

The morale and discipline problems of the NY Levies carried over into Col. Philip Van Cortlandt's 2NY when it took over garrison duties in January of 1781. Some of the offenses included cursing at superiors, guard duty infractions, and stealing, especially of food, among many others.²⁶⁷ Enemy attacks, such as Joseph Brant's March 1781 ambush of a woodcutting party from Stanwix highlighted the reasons why the commanders of the fort were strict on discipline.²⁶⁸ Enemy attacks, a lack of supplies, and low morale continued at Fort Stanwix until its abandonment in May 1781. The combined effects of torrential rains, and a fire added to the problem. Lt. Col. Cochran, again in command at Fort Stanwix, detailed the damages to the fort's sod walls from the rains.

. . . more than two thirds of the works broken down, Occationed by the late heavy Rains, and assure that the remaining will be in the same Condition in a few days . . . the Only Remaining strength, is the Outside Picquets on the glacis . . . an attempt of Repairing the Works . . . being Oblig'd to Begin at the Foundation, and thereby Open the remaining Part of the works which would prove Very dangerous in Case of an Attack as No less than five or Six hundred Men, under the direction of an Engineer, with a Sufficient Number of Artificers, Wagons, Tools, & would repair it, in the course of the summer.²⁶⁹

Then, on May 14, much of the barracks inside the fort burned down in a fire of unknown origin.²⁷⁰ This led to the garrison receiving orders to abandon Stanwix and move into Fort Herkimer. The 2NY and all of its equipment were in Fort Herkimer and the surrounding posts by June 11, 1781.²⁷¹

The removal of the garrison from Fort Stanwix to Herkimer as happened after the damages sustained by the fort in 1781 was not a new idea. In early October 1780, Col. Malcom wrote to both Gov. Clinton and to Washington about the possibility of razing Fort Stanwix and

²⁶⁷ Gavin K. Watt, *A Dirty, Trifling, Piece of Business*, 78-79, 82.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

²⁶⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Robert Cochran, Garrison Report, May 11, 1781, in Judd, *Correspondence of the Van Cortlandt Family*, vol. 2, 417-418.

²⁷⁰ Brigadier General James Clinton to Colonel Philip Van Cortlandt, May 16, 1781, in *ibid.*, 420-422.

²⁷¹ Colonel Philip Van Cortlandt to Brigadier General James Clinton, June 11, 1781, in *ibid.*, 429-430.

moving the garrison east by about thirty miles to the edge of the settlements. He wrote to Gov. Clinton, “Fort Scuyler in my opinion ought be destroyed, and the fort reestablished about one mile above Fort Herkimer — we support that garrison at great Risque & expense — both increasing — and it affords no kind of Safety to the Country — If you was here I am sure you would see the propriety of this measure — I report this opinion to the General — I wish you to take into Consideration[.]”²⁷² In his reply to Malcom, Gen. Washington passed the idea on to Gov. Clinton, as the latter knew the area and its situation better than he did.

I am not sufficiently acquainted with the situation of the County above to give an opinion upon the propriety of evacuating Fort Schuyler and establishing a post lower down. At any rate this could not be done before the new post was in sufficient forwardness to receive the Garrison immediately upon the evacuation of the old, and this, . . . would be a work of considerable time. It is a matter which will much depend on the prevailing sentiment in the State, which is more immediately interested in the measure, and as you have mentioned your opinion on the subject to His Excellency the Governor, he will I imagine take the necessary steps to have the measure adopted should it be deemed eligible.²⁷³

Washington here declined to make a decision on this issue as he claimed that he did not have sufficient knowledge of the area or the situation to give an answer.²⁷⁴ He believed that the issue could be better decided by those in New York who knew the Mohawk Valley and its situation better than himself. Malcom’s proposition to demolish Fort Stanwix in favor of a position nearer to the settlements was ultimately rejected. Many officials, both state and army, believed that Fort

²⁷² Colonel William Malcom to Governor George Clinton, October 3, 1780, in *Letters Composed by Colonel William Malcom* http://www.fort-plank.com/William_Malcoms_Letters.html (accessed on October 28, 2010).

²⁷³ General George Washington to Colonel William Malcom, October 16, 1780, in Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, vol. 20 <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&t=surround&ffset=25117881&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+20:+To+COLONEL+WILLIAM+MALCOM&query=Fort+Schuyler&=> (accessed on October 28, 2010).

²⁷⁴ Washington’s claim of ignorance of this situation, while legitimate, seems to show a rather weak effort in keeping up with the situation. He received numerous detailed reports on the major actions in the Mohawk Valley during the year, and these consistently demonstrated the inability of the fort to defend the frontiers. For more information, Washington could have easily consulted General James Clinton, Colonel Goose Van Schaick and Colonel Peter Gansevoort for their opinions on the issue. These men all had extensive knowledge of the situation in the Northern Department, especially the issues facing Fort Stanwix. If Washington did this he could have made a definite decision on the matter, rather than just “passing the buck” on to Gov. Clinton.

Stanwix was key to defending the Mohawk Valley until the fort's destruction in May 1781.²⁷⁵

The problem with this school of thought was that the 1780 raids demonstrated the inability of Fort Stanwix to halt the Loyalist and Indian raiding parties.

New York State and Continental Army officials rejected Malcom's plan, as the prevailing mindset was that if Fort Stanwix was abandoned or fell, the British would march right down the Mohawk Valley to Albany. While during the 1777 St. Leger campaign this was true, after his failure the British in Canada changed their strategy to one of using Loyalist and Indian raids to fight the war in the Mohawk Valley. The Americans viewed Fort Stanwix as the key to defending the back door to Albany placing great emphasis on keeping it manned and supplied. But the Loyalists and Indians simply marched outside of its reach, devastating the Mohawk Valley during their raids in 1778 and 1780. The raids on the Mohawk Valley in the summer and fall of 1781, after the abandonment of Fort Stanwix, ultimately proved that the British were not interested in marching a large army straight down the Mohawk Valley. These raids continued in the same vein as those that occurred in 1778 and 1780. Malcom, in his short time in the Mohawk Valley, could see the obvious. Fort Stanwix could not defend the valley against the enemy raiders, and it was rapidly becoming a major waste of money, time, and effort to keep garrisoned.

²⁷⁵ General George Washington to Brigadier General James Clinton, May 4, 1781, in Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, vol. 22, 29-30. <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=surround&ffset=27261452&g=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+22:+To+BRIGADIER+GENERAL+JAMES+CLINTON&query=Fort+Schuyler&d=gw220041> (accessed on December 29, 2010).

Conclusion

Fort Stanwix's inability to properly defend New York's western frontier from enemy attacks, combined with the logistical problems in maintaining the post, demonstrated how the fort became a liability to the Continental Army by 1780. Stanwix drained Continental Army resources of food, finances, and manpower. Further, Fort Stanwix's isolated position, the constant threat of enemy attack, and the lack of provisions led the soldiers on the garrison to despise serving at the post.

Fort Stanwix did have early success in its role of defending the Mohawk Valley. Reconstruction of its works began in July 1776 and continued into 1777. The biggest success of Fort Stanwix and its garrison was the defeat of British Lt. Col. Barry St. Leger who besieged the fort in August 1777. The garrison at that time consisted of Col. Peter Gansevoort's 3NY. The Battle of Oriskany and the sortie of Lt. Col. Marinus Willett both of which occurred on August 6, 1777, heavily demoralized the Indians in St. Leger's force. This demoralization led to the flight of the enemy force, forcing St. Leger to abandon the siege when Benedict Arnold approached with 1,000 Continentals. This was the only instance where Fort Stanwix worked as planned in its role of defending the Mohawk Valley.

Fort Stanwix also had some limited success through its relaying of intelligence received from the Oneida Indians to officials at Albany and the other local frontier forts. In November 1778, Col. Gansevoort sent information he received from an Oneida on the coming raid against Cherry Valley to Col. Ichabod Alden. This information helped to alert Mohawk Valley residents and officials to coming raids. The April 1779 expedition of Col. Goose Van Schaick against the Onondagas brought temporary respite from major raids to the residents of the Mohawk Valley. Between 1777 and 1779 Fort Stanwix saw limited success in its mission to defend the western

frontiers of New York. Despite these successes, many events that led to Stanwix becoming a drain on the Continental Army would soon occur.

There were several main factors that led to Fort Stanwix becoming a liability to the Continental Army. The first was the constant draw of provisions. Due to its isolated position, Fort Stanwix was very difficult to keep supplied. This led to near constant shortages of food at the fort, especially in 1780 and 1781. The distance between Fort Stanwix and the Continental Army supply depots coupled with the substantial parties of guards needed to defend the incoming convoys from attack led to the infrequent resupply of the fort. The 1780 raids that destroyed the Mohawk valley grain harvest prevented sufficient provisioning of the Continental Army and the forts such as Stanwix. Washington's views on the importance of Fort Stanwix to the defense of the Mohawk Valley led him to send whatever supplies he could. At times Washington would send all the supplies he had on hand just to keep Fort Stanwix afloat.

The second factor was the mindset of many Continental Army officers and other officials who believed that holding Fort Stanwix was the key to holding the Mohawk Valley. This thinking was true in 1777 during the St. Leger campaign. But after St. Leger's defeat at Stanwix, the British changed their offensive strategy in the Mohawk Valley to one that let the Indians and loyalists fight the war on their own terms. With the exception of Brant's attack on the Oneidas outside Fort Stanwix in July 1780, the raids of 1778 and 1780, took routes into the Mohawk Valley that avoided the fort. The Americans could not see this change, and subsequently continued to fight in the Mohawk Valley with a pre-1777 mindset that relied heavily on Fort Stanwix.

The problems surrounding Fort Stanwix had a major effect on the manpower of the garrison. These factors led to desertions and other discipline problems such as lax security on

work details and blatant insubordination. These issues were a factor to all of the units that garrisoned Fort Stanwix, but the better trained and motivated the men were prior to their service at the fort, the longer it took for these problems to manifest themselves. In the case of the 3NY and the 1NY it took several months or more at Stanwix for the discipline problems to appear. In the case of the NY Levies, it took less than one month. Morale and discipline problems increased among the Levies to the point that when the men heard of the incoming October raid, the men stated that they would surrender if the enemy appeared.²⁷⁶ Due to these issues, Col. William Malcom was not impressed with the quality or quantity of the Levies in Fort Stanwix.²⁷⁷ All of these factors contributed to make Fort Stanwix a liability to the Continental Army, especially after 1780.

After the destruction of the Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca Indian towns in 1779 in the Van Schaick and Clinton-Sullivan Campaigns, it was only a matter of time before the Oneidas felt the wrath of their British-allied neighbors for backing the Americans. This occurred when Joseph Brant burned the Oneidas' abandoned villages on July 26, 1780, after the Oneidas had fled to Fort Stanwix. Brant followed them to the fields outside Stanwix where the majority of the Oneidas rejected his offers and fled into the fort. The enemy force began to trade fire with the garrison until cannon fire drove them back.²⁷⁸ Brant, knowing that he had no chance of taking the fort, marched toward Canajoharie. After this attack, Stanwix faced the now nearly complete isolation of its position, except for the tenuous route along the Mohawk. This is the route the supply wagon trains travelled, with large escorts due to the Indians that hid around the fort in the forests. Brig. Gen. Robert Van Rensselaer's use of the Tryon County Militia to guard the supply

²⁷⁶ Abraham Fraser to Sir Frederick Haldimand, October 27, 1780, in Johnson, *The Bloodied Mohawk*, 173-174.

²⁷⁷ Colonel William Malcom to Governor George Clinton, September 16, 1780, in *Letters Composed by Colonel William Malcom* http://www.fort-plank.com/William_Malcoms_Letters.html (accessed on November 2, 2010).

²⁷⁸ Major John Graham to Colonel Goose Van Schaick, July 27, 1780, in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, vol. 6, 59-60.

train to Stanwix on August 2 removed the defense of the Canajoharie District just prior to Brant's descent upon it.²⁷⁹ This raid of Joseph Brant on the Oneidas in July and Canajoharie in August 1780 marked when Fort Stanwix became more of a liability than an asset to the Continental Army.

The official thought among New York State and Continental Army officials was that Fort Stanwix could not be abandoned or fall, lest the British conquer the Mohawk Valley. This is evident through the continuance to of both New York and the army to funnel men and supplies into a position that was nearly isolated. When the NY Levies took garrison there in September of 1780, Col. William Malcom made several observations that he sent on to Gov. Clinton describing the realities of the situation in the Mohawk Valley. In some of his observations, Malcom recommended the institution of martial law and the forced removal of loyalist families from the area.²⁸⁰ He also argued that the frontiers could be defended if he had reliable officers and enough provisions.²⁸¹ After Sir John Johnson's October 1780 campaign against the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys burned nearly all of Tryon County's grain harvest, Fort Stanwix's drain on Washington's Continental supply depots increased rapidly.

Washington still believed in May 1781 that "Rather than the Garrison of Fort Schuyler should fall; and the Frontiers be again desolated and laid waste, I am persuaded the State will make a great effort to afford a supply of flour for the troops in that quarter."²⁸² The problem with this thinking was that the frontiers had already been destroyed in 1780, there was very little left to destroy in 1781. Fort Stanwix repeatedly failed to do its job of defending the Mohawk Valley

²⁷⁹ Colonel Samuel Clyde to Governor George Clinton, August 8, 1780, in Johnson, *The Bloodied Mohawk*, 50-51.

²⁸⁰ Colonel William Malcom to Governor George Clinton, September 25, 1780, in *Letters Composed by Colonel William Malcom* http://www.fort-plank.com/William_Malcoms_Letters.html (accessed on December 7, 2010).

²⁸¹ Ibid. (accessed on December 7, 2010).

²⁸² General George Washington to Brigadier General James Clinton, May 4, 1781, in Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of George Washington*, vol. 22. <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&ct=text&ffset=27261452&xtreg=0&query=Fort+Schuyler&f=> (accessed on November 2, 2010).

from enemy attack, yet state and army officials acted as if it succeeded. When New York could not provide supplies, Washington sent them from his own army's supplies at times sending all that he had on hand in order to keep Stanwix fed.

The main reason that Fort Stanwix ultimately became a liability to the Continental Army was its inability to stop the enemy raiding parties into the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys. This was due to the fort being constructed to prevent a force from advancing due east down the Mohawk River. With the British strategy changing from conquering the Mohawk Valley to using Indian and loyalist raids to destroy the agricultural output of the frontiers, Fort Stanwix was unable to properly defend the territory. Fort Stanwix could not stop these destructive raids, as the enemy could enter the frontier from any direction. Realizing this, Malcom made a controversial request to both Washington and Gov. Clinton that Fort Stanwix be dismantled and the garrison moved thirty miles east to the area near Fort Herkimer.²⁸³ Malcom's recommendation was deferred to Gov. Clinton by Washington, and nothing changed at Fort Stanwix until a flood and fire forced its abandonment in May 1781.

The 1780 Loyalist and Indian raids on the Schoharie and Mohawk Valleys pushed Fort Stanwix into becoming a liability to the Continental Army. Throughout this time keeping the fort in provisions was a major undertaking that taxed the limited logistical structure of the Continental Army. This led to a near constant lack of supplies and provisions at the fort. These factors manifested themselves in 1778, and came to a head in 1780, when the inability of Stanwix's garrison to prevent or stop the enemy raids on the settlements led to the success of the loyalist and Indian raids on the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys in 1780.

²⁸³ Colonel William Malcom to Governor George Clinton, October 3, 1780, in *Letters Composed by Colonel William Malcom* http://www.fort-plank.com/William_Malcoms_Letters.html (accessed on November 2, 2010).

The inability of Fort Stanwix to stop the raids was exacerbated by the constant lack of supplies and provisions that led to the post draining provisions away from Washington's army supply depots, at times taking all of the supplies that he had on hand. Yet, even when supplied, Fort Stanwix was unable to stop the raids from destroying the frontier settlements between 1778 and 1780. Through the unwillingness of officials to realize that their strategic viewpoint on the war in the Mohawk Valley needed to change, Stanwix continued to drain away manpower, foodstuffs, and other supplies from the Continental Army in order to keep up the post. Col. Malcom was right; Fort Stanwix was a major drain on men, supplies, and money all of which could possibly be utilized more effectively nearer to the settlements that it defended.

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