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Miss ELIZA OLVER DENNISTON, Editor, Memorial Continental Hall, Washington, D. C.

Mrs. AMOS G. DRAPER, Genealogical Editor, Kendall Green, Washington, D. C.

Miss FLORENCE G. FINCH, Chm. of Magazine Committee, 237 West End Ave., New York City

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Diary of Benjamin Stevens, of Canaan, Conn.

Contributed by Mrs. Harvey T. White, through Mrs. Charles B. Goldsborough

The diary is written by Benjamin Stevens, of Canaan, Conn., who enlisted in John Stevens Company under command of Col. Chas. Burrall, February, 1776.

He was later appointed Assistant, then Commissary General at Hartford, Conn., then Commissary General at Fishkill, N. Y. His service in all covered five and a half years. From his own pen, I find this following account of his early service:

“Enlisting in the regiment under the command of Col. Chas. Burrall, February 1st, 1776. He (Stevens) marched with his company and joined the northern army in Montreal in Canada, where he was taken prisoner by the British and their savage allies, The British would threaten him with a halter for being a rebel and for the same imputed crime the savage would raise a tomahawk over his defenseless head. He was stripped almost naked and having nothing scarcely to eat, he was obliged to rest as he could through the night on the cold ground in tedious storms for nine days. After gaining his liberty, he procured what clothing he could, joined his regiment on Mount Independence at the time appointed and helped build the fort at that place.”

Monday, February 19th, 1776.—Then I enlisted into the Continental service under the command of Col. Charles Burrall, John Stevens, captain.

March the 2nd set out upon our journey for Canada and tarried at Landlord Dewey's in Sheffield.

March 3rd.—Marched as far as Richmond and lay that night at Bacons on Sunday.

4th.—Marched three miles and lay at Fort Raymond in Richmond.

5th.—Marched twenty miles to Kinderhook Mills, from thence six miles to Milberg.

6th.—Traveled to Albany and there staid three days.

10th, Sunday.—We marched to Newtown.

11th.—We marched to Stillwater and there stopped and washed our clothes.

12th.—Marched to Saratoga.

13th.—Went to Fort Edward.

14th of March we came to Fort George.

15th.—We marched across the ice to Ticonderoga and lay at the block house at the landing.

16th.—We went to Crown Point.

17th, Sunday.—We went to Addison, four miles.

18th.—We again set out to cross the lake. We went about five miles down the lake and found the ice very dangerous. We were glad to get off as well as we could and came back by land to Addison and there tarried until the 28th. Then our ensign came by with his company and about fifty of us set out to go to St. Johns by land, went as far as Otto Creek and there lay.

29th.—We marched to River Deplot and part of our company lay at Isaac Lawrence's.

30th of March.—We came to Onion River and I went down the river four miles and lay at Felix Powel's.

Sunday, 31st.—We marched to lake and went down on ice as far as the Bark Barracks on the Grand Isle and there lay.

April the 1st.—Went down the lake as far as Point Fair and lay at a house not inhabited.

April 2nd.—We went aboard a batteau and sailed to St. Johns.

3rd.—Went to Chambley and there tarried two days.

5th.—Marched to Longueil there lay.

6th.—Marched across St. Lawrence River to Montreal.

April 18th.—Col. Arnold came to town, and on Sunday the 21st we had orders to march by the river as far as Lacline.

22nd.—Part of our company set out by land and part of us by water. We went in boats up about six miles and then went on guard four miles to Lacline and there staid.

23rd.—Went about four miles into the town and there stayed.

24th.—Marched six miles by the river to Point Clear and there lay.

25th.—Marched eight miles to Point Levi and there tarried.

26th.—Col. Beetles' regiment went over the river to go to the Cedars and left us here. The command of the Fort is left with Lieut. Kimball until further orders.

27th.—Sergt. Fellows and Zebulon Gilbert went out upon a scout, killed a buck and got his scalp.

28th, Sunday, very clear morning.

29th.—Lieut. Patterson with men came here and joined our company. This morning about ten o'clock came a Frenchman and informed us that three canoes have gone down the river after stores for the regulars and desired our people to go and take them. Accordingly our people are ready and will set out as soon as the Pilot comes.

April 29th.—Last night our men went in persuit of those canoes. Found one and let it pass.

April 30th.—It rained in the afternoon and at night it snowed.

May 1st.—This morning the snow was over shoes and a very tedious day.

May 5th, Sunday, 1776.—Set sail from St. Anns for Caralion, went as far as Caughnasudaug in the forenoon, being nine miles. In the afternoon we sailed up the river eighteen miles to Caralion, the Grand Place we have been sentenced to.

May the 6th, 1776.—Capt. Stevens ordered me to do the duty of Clerk and Orderly Sergt.

May 9th.—We received orders to march to the Cedars to join Col. Beetles' regiment it being general election. In the forenoon went to Settlement nine miles below Caralion and there ate dinner, then sailed down to Caughnasudaug. Stopped there a while, we fired off our wall piece and they saluted us with a six pounder. From thence to St. Anns. Left Eagleston sick with the Small Pox, and went over to the landing five miles to go to The Cedars, there I lay in a Mill.

10th.—Travelled five miles down to the Cedars landing, from thence one mile toward the fort and there lay.

11th of May, 1776.—Went and helped draw a couple of botdeaux up the rapids and at night put up at our old lodgings.

Sunday, 12th of May.—This day I see the first dandalions and strawberries in bloom that I have seen this year.

Went in forenoon and helped draw up a boat up the river St. Lawrence. In the afternoon landed at the Cedars by the fort and here we have taken up our abode for I know not how long.

May the 15th.—Our scouts came back and brought news the enemy was within six miles of this place. We immediately were drawed out to take our posts in case of on alarm. We soon got at breast-work prepared by the pickets, and every man knows his own place. At night our men discovered some stores in a barn nearby. Set a guard by it immediately.

About midnight a scout set out for to go up the river to take some stores, went up the river about six miles and took twenty-five bags of flour and returned in the morning. We are now intrrenching.

May 18th.—About midnight last night news came that the provisions we had coming by the river was like to be taken by the regulars. A party of our men set out and went down to guard it up in the morning. According they loaded the provisions into carts and set out on

guard for this place. As they were coming on the road the savages fired upon the guard and killed Charles Gillett of Capt. Down's Company and took and killed Zebos Lewis of Capt. Steven's Company. We had something of a brush in the morning and about seven o'clock they began to fire which lasted until dark but did no damage. N. B.—In the morning action. There was a man shot through the shoulder.

Sunday, 19th.—Last night lay by the breastwork all night. In the forenoon came the King's couriers in view. Our flag, a truce met with them and after a long parley our officers surrendered up the fort and now we are prisoners.

The Lord protect us and keep up from harm.

20th.—In the forenoon news came that a party of our men were coming for our relief. We that are prisoners were all ordered into the church and there shut up till the action was over. The savages whooped a few times and with the Canadians set out for action. They waylaid our people in a wood and began a very long heavy fire on both sides. Our people being too few in number was obliged to retreat and intended to get to the boats, but was not able by reason of the Canadians who got between them and their boats. Our men saw that they could retreat no further, surrendered up their arms to the Canadians and themselves prisoners. The savages were determined to cut off every man of them but were prevented by the officers promising them our plunder. Accordingly the savages stripped them almost naked and delivered them up to the King's troops and the 21st, next morning, the savages came where we were and stripped us of whatever pleased them and so continued until they had got almost all we had in the garrison and was hardly satisfied with that.

21st.—We set out for St. Anns and went about nine miles and lay in a sheep stable. I have nothing to wear nor lay upon but a great coat.

I was stripped of all but one shirt,

my great coat, straight bodied coat, a pair of shoes, two pair of stockings and my breeches. I gave my straight bodied coat to Capt. Stevens, who was stripped naked to his shirt.

22nd of May.—Set out again and travelled four miles to the side of the lake or river and there we lay on the cold ground almost naked. About midnight it began to rain and rained during the night.

23rd.—We went across in boats to St. Anns and there lay.

About 100 savages and 100 Canadians set out for Lachine in pursuit of a party of our people that are intrenching there. The rest encamped without the fort.

24th.—This morning the rest of the savages and Canadians with the King's troop set out for Lachine and shut up the prisoners in the chamber and garret and there kept us till about one o'clock at night and then came with batteaux and carried us over to an island. Here they left us under guard. It being the 25th of May, 1776.

We spent this day in trouble about how we should get away. About 8 o'clock came one of the King's officers and said if we would promise never to take up arms any more against the King we should be set at liberty to go home. The regular officer took two of our prisoners and set out for Caughnasadaug to see our officers; but what will be done is not known this night. We lay in the woods on the cold ground.

26th, Sunday.—At 2 o'clock came to view 500 of our men commanded by Gen. Arnold. They surrounded St. Anns and took possession of the fort. But to our misfortune the savages discovered them and came in haste to drive us out of sight of our army. They took some of our sick into a canoe and drove the rest of us down the island as far as they could get us, through swamps and water, as high as our waists.

At last they came to a creek that was deep and swift, one man swam across, another set out but was unhappily drowned.

This was the most awful sight that ever my eyes beheld. Nothing but scenes of misery and woe attended us. The savages behind driving us, the water all around.

One man was sick and could not travel. Another attempted to hide himself, but both shared the fate of death by these barbarians whose savage cruelties are incredible.

At last came the batteaux that belongs to the King's troops and in a short time carried us all off from this place, but before they could get out of sight, there came fifteen boat loads of our men in pursuit of us before they came very nigh we were all shut up in the church at a place called 15 Dogs, there the regulars had placed the field pieces they had taken from us, they fired eight shots with at our men but as fortune would have it, they did no harm at all. The boats went below in order to land but did not make out.

The savages gave them balls from two quarters, but did no hurt. * * *

(The diary ends here abruptly. Of course, I do not know the reason, probably he had no material for continuing with.

On the back cover is jotted down 4 crude records of ammunition which is interesting.

"An account of the ammunition Lieut. Jesse Kimball delivered to Capt. John Stevens Company at St. Anns, May, 1776."

Fuzee Cartridges.

Delivered to Simeon Duyee, 20 Car.
To Randall Hewit, 7 Car.
To Surges Blackmore, 17 Car.
Paul Moon, 20 Car.

Musket Cartridges.

Thos. Fleming, 12 Car.
James Clary, 10 Car.
Joseph A. Tanner, 10 Car.
Julius Davis, 10 Car.)

Interesting Event in Cheshire, Mass.

Under the auspices of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Bunker Hill Day, June 17th, was observed in Cheshire, Mass., by unveiling a drinking fountain, a gift from Mrs. Sanders Johnston, the editor of the Lineage Book, N. S. D. A. R., and that day was selected as she was a descendant of George Bunker for whom Bunker Hill was named.

The gift was in memory of her ancestors and the tablet on the massive granite fountain tell the traveler of the yeoman who saved the day at Bennington, but it does not state that it is the first memorial to their valor and it is fitting that the Insignia of the Daughters is stamped in bronze on both sides.

It was a red letter day for the Daughters of Berkshire county.

The guests of honor included Mrs. William Cumming Story, President-General; Mrs. James G. Dunning, Honorary State Regent of Massachusetts;

Mrs. Mary S. Lockwood, a Founder and Chaplain General; Mrs. Joseph E. Ransdell, Treasurer General; Mrs. Joseph S. Wood, Vice-President General; Mrs. Frances W. Roberts, Honorary State Regent and Miss Grace M. Pierce, State historian, all of New York; Mrs. Sarah T. Kinney, Honorary Vice-President General; Mrs. Charles C. Abbott, Vice-President General; Mrs. Julius Jacob Estey, Honorary State Regent of Vermont; Miss Florence G. Finch, Chairman of the Magazine Committee; Joseph E. Pierson, President of the S. A. R. of Berkshire County; President Harry Garfield, of Williams College; Prof. Amasa H. Morton, Judge Sanborn G. Tenney, Charles Buckley Hubell, former President of the State Board of Education of New York and a direct descendant of Col. Rossiter who commanded the 2d Massachusetts regiment of the battle of Bennington and E. B. Bowen of Cheshire.

The exercises were under the imme-