

NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY *Continued*

Submitted by Village of Richfield Springs Historian Harriett Geywits

This two-part neighborhood history was presented in 1913 by Nettie Tuller Ward who was a member of the Ganowanges Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Part one, previously printed in the Turnpike Pennysaver, gave information on when Richfield and surrounding areas were formed. This part deals with the time of the Revolution and some of the happenings in nearby settlements.

"Prior to 1775, French traders and trappers frequented all parts of New York State where game was abundant, including a little settlement located on the site of the Lake House on both sides of the brook which crosses the highway and winds its way to the lake. One of these Frenchmen and his Indian mate remained as late as 1805.

The region all around Canadarago Lake was the home of the Oneidas before its settlement by the whites. Two Mohegan Indians, Captain John and his son, Panther, came from the Connecticut Valley near the close of the 18th century and built a wigwam on the high ground near the lake. Here they lived several years. The father, Capt. John, found death in the placid waters of the Canadarago and was buried on the knoll opposite to the Lake House. The son soon brought a mate from Connecticut and built a log cabin in the little forest familiarly known as the First Lake woods. Here Panther and Polly lived many years. About 1868, they made one of their periodical visits to their native scenes and were never seen here again. At different points around the lake are places that denote permanent Indian camps and from these, many flint arrow heads have been dug.

The old Indian trail from the Mohawk to the Unadilla country led up through Columbia and passed to the south a short distance west of this village on what is now the roadway from Gano's to the old covered bridge. (Rt. 28) Some writers discredit the idea that General Herkimer and his detachment of troops used this trail in June 1777 on their way to Unadilla to meet Brant, but there is no doubt that some portion of the detachment

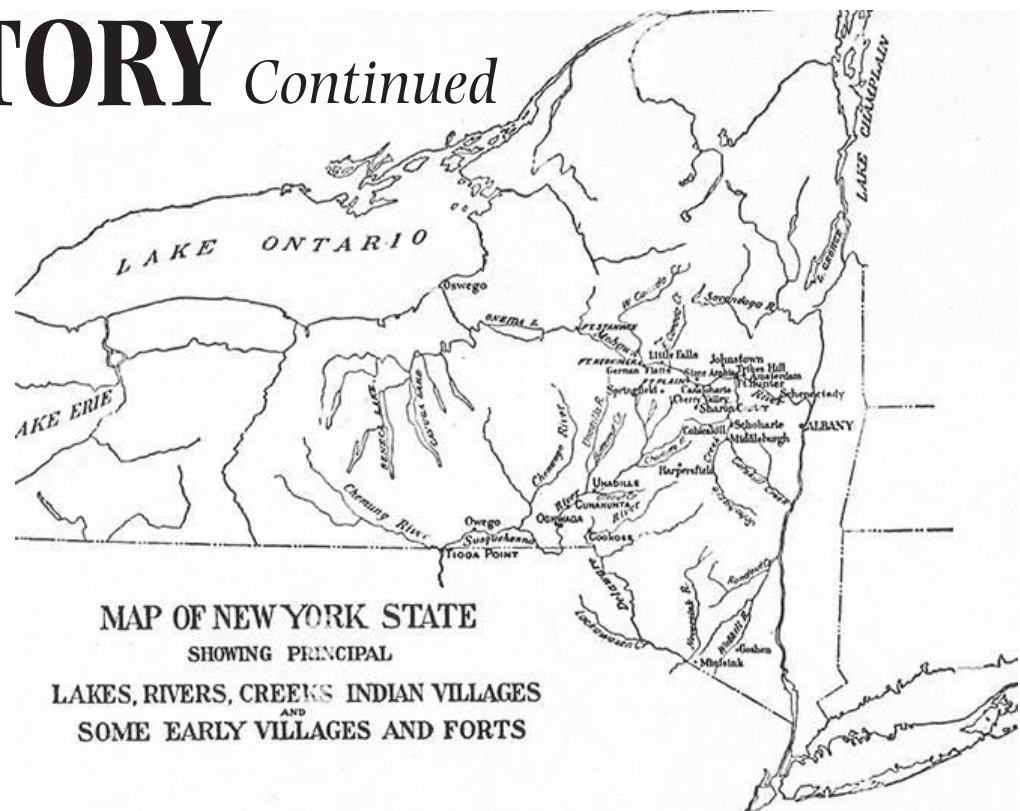
went that way, although the main body may have passed through to Otsego Lake by way of Cherry Valley. Over this trail passed the patriotic scouts, Herkimer, Smith, Helmer and Schuyler from the Mohawk forts to and from the Indian country.

East of us, about three miles, is Little Lakes (Warren) were, before the Revolution, Young and ten others, among them one named Colyer, obtained a grant of land. Young and Colyer were Tories and gave aid to Brant on his way to attack Andrustown. After the massacre, a party of Americans at Fort Herkimer, learning of the terrible affair, set out in pursuit of the Indians and came as far as Little Lakes. Young and Colyer had fled fearing the vengeance of the Americans. Their buildings were plundered and burned. A few years ago, Sanford Tunnicliff, who lives upon this historic spot, plowed up a number of articles buried by the Tories before their flight.

In 1777, George Knouts, a pioneer settler of Little Lakes, was taken prisoner and in 1778, his wife was left for dead. She was found, cared for, recovered and lived to be 115 years old.

About fifty years before the Revolution, there was a settlement at the site of Andrustown. It was first called Henderson as it was on Dr. Henderson's grant of 26,000 acres. The people on the side of colonial liberty were marked for destruction by the Royalists. They were obliged to take refuge in Fort Herkimer in 1777, but in 1778 managed to put in a few crops on their deserted farms. In July, Bell, his son and grandson, Stauring and son and others went out to cut hay accompanied by their wives for the latter's safety. A party of Indians and Tories led by Brant appeared. Both Bells and the Stauring boy were made prisoners. All the buildings were burned and four men were killed. Brant ordered the women spared.

East of us about seven miles, where the old Continental Road crosses the Third Great Western Turnpike, stands a beautiful marker erected by the General James Clinton chapter



DAR of Springfield. This Continental Road was opened by Gen. Clinton and his troops from Canajoharie through the town of Springfield to the head of Otsego Lake. There they launched their fleet of bateaus and floated down the placid waters nine miles to the outlet, now the location of Cooperstown.

At this time there was not a house in the now prosperous village. Here they remained several weeks constructing a dam to float the boats filled with troops down the Susquehanna to meet Sullivan at Tioga Point and join in the expedition against the Six Nations.

The Cherry Valley massacre of November 10, 1778, is a familiar bit of history to us all. The atrocities committed under Brant and Butler would fill a volume. Thirty-two citizens and sixteen soldiers were killed and between thirty and forty taken captive and carried on the Susquehanna to the Genesee country where a division of prisoners took place. Some of these captives escaped and came back as the years passed and their descendants are now living in the little village so full of the terrible memories.

East of Otsego Lake is a spot called 'Niska Rock' and there the Indians camped with their captives on their retreat from Cherry

Valley. In 1780, three Shaul brothers were made prisoners and taken to Canada from their home near Van Hornesville. Two of them were exchanged in due time and came home but the third remained in Canada several years. The women and children of this family are said to have been captured and then allowed to return to the settlement unharmed.

In June of the same year, three families lived about a mile north of Springfield Center on the road to the Kuyle (Chyle) settlement. The male members of the families had gone to Cherry Valley on business. The women and children, becoming alarmed, started for Fort Plain, fifteen miles away. It was nearly dark and they hid themselves for the night under a fallen treetop in the swamp. They had not gone far in the morning when they saw Brant standing upon a stump watching them. He motioned them back to concealment and by the same means directed the way to safety. In the late hours of that day, they reached the fort.

In presenting this bit of neighborhood history, I have touched only lightly on subjects. I trust that it will prove of interest to others who will continue on in researching our area history."