



NEWSLETTER

#1 2004

A Chronology Of The Revolutionary War

with emphasis on Bedford County, Pennsylvania's role

Continued

1777: Burgoyne's Plan For A Campaign To Divide And Conquer The Colonies

'Gentleman Johnny' Burgoyne had returned to England in 1776, after a somewhat ineffectual command at Boston. While home, it was said, Burgoyne 'took the waters' at Bath, and was revitalized, both physically and mentally. He devised a plan to divide New England from the southern colonies, and thereby more easily conquer one half of the colonies first, and then the other half at his leisure. The fifty-two year old Major General was so sure of his plan, that he placed a wager in the betting-book of the fashionable Brooks' Club in London, which stated: "*John Burgoyne wagers Charles Fox one pony that he will be home victorious from America by Christmas Day, 1777*".

General Burgoyne put his plan into the form of a written proposal, which he titled: *Thoughts For Conducting The War From The Side Of Canada*. The proposal was submitted to Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for America, on 28 February, 1777. It called for a force of 8,000

men to sweep southward from Canada by Lake Champlain, taking Fort Ticonderoga enroute, to meet a smaller force traveling by way of the Mohawk River from Oswego. The two forces would join at the Hudson River above Albany, the ultimate object of the campaign. General Sir William Howe would then lead a force up the Hudson River to join in the assault on Albany. The taking of Albany from the Rebels, and the coincident control of the Hudson River would effectively seal off the New England colonies from the southern colonies. On the 3rd of March, Sir William Howe submitted his own proposal to Lord Germain. Howe wanted to ferry an army from New York to the Chesapeake Bay in order to mount an attack on Philadelphia. Lord Germain was agreeable to both plans, assuming that Howe would complete the Philadelphia campaign in time to move northward to assist Burgoyne.

General Burgoyne's *Thoughts* follows:

Thoughts for Conducting the War from the Side of Canada

When the *laft* *fhips* came from Quebec, a report prevailed in Canada, *faid* to have been founded upon *poftive* evidence, that the rebels had laid the keels of *feveral* large *vefels* at Skeneborough and Ticonderoga, and were *refolved* to exert their *utmoft* powers, to *conftruct* a new and formidable fleet during the winter.

I will not, however, give credit to their exertions, in *fuch* a degree as to imagine the King's troops will be prevented *pafting* Lake Champlain early in the *fummer*, but will *fuppofe* the operations of the army to begin from Crown Point.

But as the *prefent* means to form effectual plans is to lay down every *poftible* difficulty, I will *fuppofe* the enemy in great force at Ticonderoga; the different works there are capable of admitting twelve thoufand men.

I will *fuppofe* him *alfo* to occupy Lake George with a *confiderable* naval *ftrength*, in order to *fecure* his retreat, and afterwards to retard the campaign; and it is natural to expect that he will take *meafures* to block up the roads from Ticonderoga to Albany by the way of Skeneborough, by fortifying the *ftrong* ground at different places, and thereby obliging the King's army to carry a weight of artillery with it, and by felling trees, breaking bridges, and other obvious impediments, to delay, though he *fhould* not have power or *fpirit* finally to *refift*, its *progrefs*.

The enemy thus *difpofed* upon the *fide* of Canada, it is to be *confidered* what troops will be *neceffary*, and what *difpofition* of them will be *moft* proper to *profecute* the campaign with vigor and effect.

I humbly conceive the operating army (I mean *exclufively* of the troops left for the *fecurity* of Canada) ought not to *confift* of *lefs* than 8000 regulars, rank and file. The artillery required in the memorandums of General Carleton, a corps of watermen, 2000

Canadians, including hatchet-men and other workmen, and 1000 or more *favages*.

It is to be hoped that the reinforcement and the victualling *fhips* may all be ready to *fail* from the Channel and from Corke on the *laft* day of March. I am *perfuated* that to *fail* with a fleet of *fhips* earlier, is to *fubject* Government to *lofs* and *difappointment*. It may *reafonably* be expected that they will reach Quebec before the 20th of May, a period in full time for opening the campaign. The roads, and the rivers and lakes, by the melting and running off of the *fnows*, are in common years *impracticable* *fooner*.

But as the weather long before that time will probably have admitted of labour in the docks, I will take for granted that the fleet of *laft* year, as well *batteaux* as armed *vefels*, will be found repaired, augmented, and fit for immediate *fervice*. The magazines that remain of *provisions*, I believe them not to be abundant, will probably be formed at Montreal, Sorel and Chamblee.

I conceive the *firft* *buftnefs* for *thofe* entrusted with the chief powers, *fhould* be to *felect* and *poft* the troops *deftined* to remain in Canada; to throw up the military *ftores* and *provision* with all *poftible* *difpatch*, in which *fervice* the above mentioned troops, if properly *pofted*, will greatly *afift*, and to draw the army *deftined* for operation to cantonments, within as few days' march of St. John's as conveniently may be. I *fhould* prefer cantonments at that *feafon* of the year to encampment, as the ground is very damp, and *confequently* very pernicious to the men, and more *efpecially* as they will have been for many months before *ufed* to lodgings, heated with *ftoves*, or between the decks of *fhips*; all *thefe* operations may be put in motion together, but they *feverally* require *fome* *obfervation*.

I *fhould* wifh that the troops left in Canada, *fuppofing* the number mentioned in my former memorandum to be approved, might be made as follows:

The 31st regiment, Britifh, *exclufive* of

fortifying the posts; all which should be done to a certain degree, previous to the proceeding in force to Ticonderoga; to such a degree I mean as may be supposed to be effected in time of transporting artillery, preparing fascines, and other necessaries for artillery operations; and by keeping the rest of the army back during that period, the transport of provisions will be lessened, and the soldiers made of use in forwarding the convoys.

But though there would be only one brigade at Crown Point at that time, it does not follow that the enemy should remain in a state of tranquillity. Corps of savages, supported by detachments of light regulars, should be continually on foot to keep them in alarm, and within their works to cover the reconnoitring of general officers and engineers, and to obtain the best intelligence of their strength, position, and design.

If due exertion is made in the preparations stated above, it may be hoped that Ticonderoga will be reduced early in the summer and it will then become a more proper place for arms than Crown Point.

The next measure must depend upon those taken by the enemy, and upon the general plan of the campaign as concerted at home. If it be determined that General Howe's whole forces should act upon Hudson's River, and to the southward of it, and that the only object of the Canada army to effect a junction with that force, the immediate possession of Lake George would be of great consequence, as the most expeditious and most commodious route to Albany; and should the enemy be in force upon that lake, which is very probable, every effort should be tried, by throwing savages and light troops around it, to oblige them to quit it without waiting for naval preparations. Should those efforts fail, the route by South Bay and Skeneborough might be attempted, but considerable difficulties may be expected, as the narrow parts of the river may be easily choked up and rendered impassable, and at best there will be necessity for a great deal of

land carriage for the artillery, provision, etc. which can only be supplied from Canada. In case of success also by that route, and the enemy not removed from Lake George, it will be necessary to leave a chain of posts, as the army proceeds, for the securities of your communication, which may too much weaken so small an army.

Left all these attempts should unavoidably fail, and it become indispensably necessary to attack the enemy by water upon Lake George, the army at the outset should be provided with carriages, implements, and artificers, for conveying armed vessels from Ticonderoga to the lake.

These ideas are formed upon the supposition, that it be the sole purpose of the Canada army to effect a junction with General Howe, or after cooperating so far as to get possession of Albany and open the communication to New York, to remain upon the Hudson's River, and thereby enable that general to act with his whole force to the southward.

But should the strength of the main American army be such as to admit of the corps of troops now at Rhode Island remaining there during the winter, and acting separately in the spring, it may be highly worthy consideration, whether the most important purpose to which the Canada army could be employed, supposing it in possession of Ticonderoga, would not be to gain the Connecticut River.

The extent of country from Ticonderoga to the inhabited country upon that river, opposite to Charles Town, is about sixty miles, and though to convey artillery and provision so far by land would be attended with difficulties, perhaps more than those above suggested, upon a progress to Skeneborough, should the object appear worthy it is to be hoped resources might be found; in that case it would be advisable to fortify with one or two strong redoubts the heights opposite to Charles Town, and establish posts of savages upon the passage from Ticonderoga to those heights, to

preserve the communication, and at the same time prevent any attempt from the country above Charles Town, which is very populous, from molesting the rear or interrupting the convoys of supply, while the army proceeded down the Connecticut. Should the junction between the Canada and Rhode Island armies be effected upon the Connecticut, it is not too sanguine an expectation that all the New England provinces will be reduced by their operations.

To avoid breaking in upon other matter, I omitted in the beginning of these papers to state the idea of an expedition at the outset of the campaign by the Lake Ontario and Oswego to the Mohawk River, which, as a diversion to facilitate every proposed operation, would be highly desirable, provided the army should be reinforced sufficiently to afford it.

It may at first appear, from a view of the present strength of the army, that it may bear the force of detachment proposed by myself last year for this purpose; but it is to be considered that at that time the utmost object of the campaign, from the advanced season and unavoidable delay of preparation for the lakes, being the reduction of Crown Point and Ticonderoga, unless the success of my expedition had opened the road to Albany, no greater numbers were necessary than for those first operations. The case in the present year differs; because the season of the year affording a prospect of very extensive operation, and consequently the establishment of many posts, patrols, etc., will become necessary. The army ought to be in a state of numbers to bear those drains, and still remain sufficient to attack anything that probably can be opposed to it.

Nor, to argue from probability, is so much force necessary for this diversion this year, as was required for the last; because we then knew that General Schuyler with a thousand men, was fortified upon the Mohawk. When the different situations of things are considered, viz, the progress of General Howe,

the early invasion from Canada, the threatening of the Connecticut from Rhode Island, etc., it is not to be imagined that any detachment of such force as that of Schuyler can be supplied by the enemy for the Mohawk. I would not therefore propose it of more (and I have great diffidence whether so much can be prudently afforded) than Sir John Johnson's corps, and a hundred British from the second brigade, and a hundred more from the 8th regiment, with four pieces of the lightest artillery, and a body of savages; Sir John Johnson to be with the detachment in person, and an able field officer to command it. I should wish Lieutenant Colonel St. Leger for that employment.

I particularize the second brigade, because the first is proposed to be diminished by the 31st regiment remaining in Canada, and the rest of the regiment drafted for the expedition being made also part of the Canada force, the two brigades will be exactly squared.

Should it appear, upon examination of the really effective numbers of the Canada army, that the force is not sufficient for proceeding upon the above ideas with a fair prospect of success, the alternative remains of embarking the army at Quebec, in order to effect a junction with General Howe by sea or to be employed separately to cooperate with the main designs, by such means as should be within their strength upon other parts of the continent. And though the army, upon examination of the numbers from the returns here, and the reinforcements designed, should appear adequate, it is humbly submitted, as a security against the possibility of its remaining inactive, whether it might not be expedient to entrust the latitude of embarking the army by sea to the commander-in-chief, provided any accidents during the winter, and unknown here, should have diminished the numbers considerably, or that the enemy, from any winter success to the southward, should have been able to draw such forces towards the frontiers of Canada, and take up their ground with such precaution, as to render the intended

meafure impracticable or too hazardous. But in that cafe it muft be confidered that more force would be required to be left behind for the fecurity of Canada, than is fuppofed to be necefsary when an army is beyond the lake, and I do not conceive any expedition from the fea can be fo formidable to the enemy, or fo effectual to clofe the war, as an invafion from Canada to Ticonderoga. This laft meafure ought not to be thought of, but upon pofitive conviction of its necefsity.

J. BURGOYNE Herford-Street, Feb. 28th, 1777

Lord Germain did indeed approve the proposal, and General Burgoyne, newly promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General, received his men and supplies. Of British and German soldiers, the force raised for the campaign amounted to

7,173 men. Of this number, some 3,217 were Brunswick Germans.

On 06 May, 1777 Burgoyne landed between the red cliffs of Levis and the massive rock upon which Quebec was situated.

Just about everything was looking good for the campaign. The German troops who had been quartered at Quebec through the winter of 1776/77 were ready to get about the business of war. The winter had been so unusually mild, that the inhabitants called it the “German winter”. The subordinate British officers were first-class. Even Sir Guy Carleton, seemed unfazed by the fact that, despite being the Governor of the Canadian colony, and the man with whom a campaign should at least have been discussed, he had been shamelessly ignored by Germain.

This chronology of the American Revolutionary War will be continued in a future newsletter.



The *gorget* was a halfmoon shaped piece of metal insignia that was hung around the neck by a piece of ribbon or cord. It was the last vestige of armor, descended from the medieval knight’s full suit, and the ancestor of the modern-day jewelry necklace. By the time of the American Revolutionary War, the gorget was beginning to lose favor as a part of the military officer’s uniform, but they were still used to show rank by commissioned officers.

There was a law, the British Warrant of 1768, which required that British gorgets be engraved with the ‘Kings Arms’ such as the one shown here. The gorget, as part of a regular suit of armor, was five to six inches in width and four to five inches in height. The one illustrated here was what was known as a ‘trade gorget’ because it was intended to be traded to the American Indians in exchange for animal furs or the like. Trade gorgets were smaller than regular ones, because they were not necessarily intended for actual use.

Blair County Chapter Calendar ~ 2004

Feb 28 1st Quarterly Meeting – Kings Restaurant, 3000 6th Ave., Altoona

Normally, the scheduled year’s meeting dates are included in the first newsletter of the year. This year, though, the only date set thus far for a quarterly meeting is that for the 1st Quarterly Meeting. An updated calendar for the year 2004 will be included in the next newsletter.