



# Empire Patriot

**Empire State Society  
Sons of The American Revolution  
Descendants of America's First Soldiers**

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## **1777: THE ONEIDAS AND THE BIRTH OF THE AMERICAN NATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Fighting for the cause of American liberty and independence, the Oneida Nation sent its warriors to battlegrounds ranging from Valley Forge, PA to the Canadian border of New York during the Revolution. The alliance forged with the nascent United States was of the Oneidas' choosing. It was one they honored throughout the war and they honored it still. The price paid by the Oneida Nation for this stand is almost beyond comprehension. They lost their homes and property, they endured starvation, disease, and the sometimes violent bigotry of their allies; and they lost the lives of at least a third of their people. At the most crucial moment of the conflict, in the decisive year of war, the Oneidas stood forth and played a strategically significant role in the American Revolution. For generations, Oneidas in their ancestral country of present-day New York have kept alive the tradition of the timely help they offered to the United States and the terrible suffering they endured in the American cause. William Rockwell, an Oneida leader early in this century, recorded a remark made by an elderly Oneida in 1909: "If all the skulls of the Oneida Indians killed by British forces in fighting to help the colonials get their freedom were piled together, the pile would be larger than the capital building in Albany." Unfortunately, Oneida contributions to the outcome of that struggle remain virtually unknown today.

### **1777: DECISIVE YEAR OF THE WAR**

School textbooks present the Revolutionary War as a sequence of events focused on the actions of American people in America: anger at British taxes; Saratoga; winter at Valley Forge; years of inconclusive maneuver then, finally, sudden victory at Yorktown in 1781. In this view of the Revolution, Saratoga and other victories of 1777 were important because they long sustained the American cause. Just how significant the American victories

of 1777 were becomes clearer when we widen our perspective of the war to include Great Britain and the global context of the struggle.

The British government was able to formulate a strategic plan for victory, set up the operation, and actually carry it out on only one occasion during the war: This action occurred during the year 1777. The plan was to isolate New England from the other colonies. New England, considered the hot bed of the rebellion, was to be treated as a localized cancer which would be separated from other American provinces. Without New England, Anti-British sentiment would die down elsewhere. The physical separation of New England was to be accomplished by two British armies invading south from Canada. The larger, under General Burgoyne, would proceed down the natural corridor formed by the Richelieu River, Lake George, and Lake Champlain to the Hudson River. Around Albany, this army would link up with the second army which would have followed the Mohawk Valley east to the



Hudson. This smaller force under St. Leger would first secure the Oneida Carrying Place — a tremendously vital node for communication and transportation throughout the entire Northeast guarded by Fort Stanwix (called Schuyler by the Americans) at Rome. St. Leger's army would also take the Mohawk Valley, important to both sides as a key agricultural district and a pesky region of patriot sentiment in its own right. These movements would be supported by a third army in New York City commanded by Gen. Howe. Howe, apparently, was given wide latitude in the nature of his supporting movements and he was not ordered to join Burgoyne and St. Leger at Albany.

Both invasions were defeated (St. Leger at Fort Stanwix and Burgoyne at Saratoga) with important consequences on the war. Largely as a result of these battles, France openly declared war on Great Britain and rendered invaluable aid to the American cause thereafter. The final military showdown at Yorktown, for

## ROCHESTER CHAPTER HONORS AWARDEES

*Submitted by Chapter President Steve Clarke*

The Rochester Chapter held its annual George Washington's Birthday Luncheon on Saturday, 19 February at the Park Plaza Hotel in Rochester. Forty-seven SAR, DAR and CAR members, guests and honorees attended. The honorees were Compatriot Millard A. Fairley, Jr., Meritorious Service Medal (second award); Eagle Scout Andrew Morabito, Eagle Scout Recognition Medal and Rochester Chapter scholarship; Rochester City Firefighter Abraham Crews, Fire Safety Medal; Town of Gates Police Chief Thomas Roche, Law Enforcement Medal and New York State Senator George Maziarz, Silver Good Citizenship Medal.

Following the luncheon, Chapter President Steve Clarke delivered the toast to the memory of President Washington and presented the honorees with their medals and certificates. Compatriot Fairley was recognized for his long-standing service to the Chapter, especially as Treasurer, as well as for his long-time commitment to the SAR at the state and national levels. Eagle Scout Morabito was chosen on the basis of his application and essay in response to the Chapter's annual Eagle Scout recognition program. Mrs. Colette Morabito, Andrew's mother, pinned the SAR medal to his shirt. Firefighter Abraham Crews, a fire investigator for the City of Rochester, was recognized for his outstanding program to work with troubled youths who become involved with arson and other fire-related problems. The Rochester Fire Department previously cited Crews as Outstanding Firefighter of the Year. Town of Gates Police Chief Thomas Roche was recognized for 38 years of service to the Town as police officer and Chief. His list of accomplishments and items of service to the Gates community and the State of New York is remarkable for its length and diversity. New York State Senator George Maziarz whose 62nd Senate District covers about a third of the Rochester Chapter's service area. During his ten years in the Senate, Maziarz has built a reputation as a hard-working and dedicated public servant who is noted for his commitment to his constituency. The Rochester Chapter is proud to have honored these outstanding citizens and the memory of President Washington.



*President Steve Clarke & Compatriot Millard Fairley*



*President Steve Clarke with Firefighter Abraham Crews and Daughter Denise*



*Mrs. Thomas Roche, President Steve Clarke and Town Of Gates Police Chief Thomas Roche*

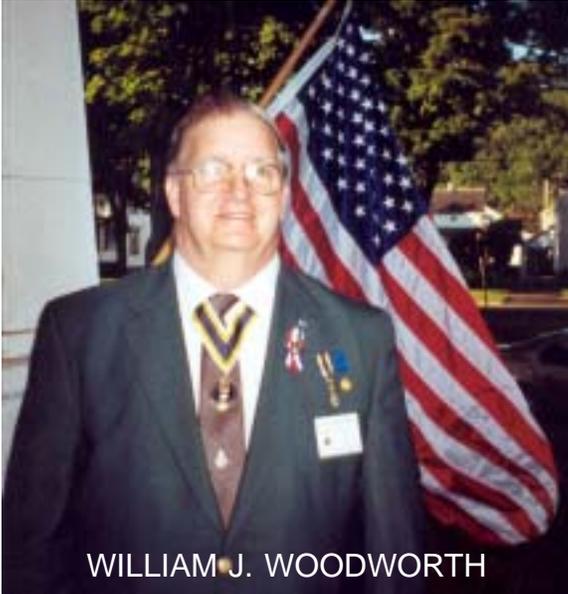


*Mrs. Colette Morabito and Son, Eagle Scout Andrew Morabito*



*President Steve Clarke and Senator George Maziarz*

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR STATE PRESIDENT



WILLIAM J. WOODWORTH

Hopefully, with this issue of the "Empire Patriot" we will have Winter behind us, at least those of us who live in the snow belts. I hope you "survived" the weather and had minor if any health problems to deal with.

It was again an honor for me to represent each of you and the SAR at the 86th Annual NYSSCAR Conference held in Poughkeepsie, NY. Anyone who has never had the chance to attend a CAR Conference is missing out on a real experience. These young men and women conduct themselves as well as their meetings in such a way that we could all learn from them. Once again, my Page was Philip Moser, a young man about 6-7 years old who took his position very seriously as well as his Patriotism.

During the awards banquet it was my pleasure on behalf of the ESSAR to present John Michael Barrack, the outgoing NYSSCAR President, with the SAR CAR Medal of Appreciation. I also presented Celeste Ann Gothe, who has been very active in the DAR as well as the CAR, with the SAR Medal of Appreciation. The last presentation went to a fine young man, Brian McPartland, who really impressed me last year at the 85th Conference with his report on Native Americans. I presented him with a copy of the Oneida Nation Canandaigua Treaty of 1794 which contained the signatures of George Washington and the 40 Chiefs of the Iroquois Nation. I also presented him with a lapel pin of the Oneida Nation Flag and American Flag combined. I would strongly recom-

mend that you attend one of these CAR Conference events if at all possible. The dates and place are already set for next year - Poughkeepsie, NY - March 11-12, 2006. I have invited the newly elected NYSSCAR State President and Senior State President to attend our upcoming ESSAR Annual Meeting.

We are also expecting Mr. James N. Randall - Executive Director of the National Society, SAR to attend our Annual Meeting. The ESSAR Annual Meeting will again be held at the Beeches in Rome, NY on 14 May 2005.

Hank Croteau continues to do a great job in making sure we have a quality society newsletter. During one of our recent "e-mail conversations" Hank expressed concern over the lack of Chapter reports being sent to him. At the time of this conversation, he had only received 3 Chapter reports. I would ask that if the Chapter Presidents cannot have a report ready to submit for these issues of the "Empire Patriot" on the deadline that Hank has given us, please have someone in your Chapter send in a report. Pictures are also needed if you have an event, important issue, etc. that took place within your Chapter or event you participated in. Remember this is your newsletter and your help is needed.

In closing, Roy Goold, our ESSAR Registrar has informed me that we had another good year for new applications submitted I wish to thank all of those who helped in making this possible.

To the Editor:

I would like to inform readers of the *Empire Patriot Magazine* of a wonderful new exhibit slated to open at Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown, New York on April 1. *Revolution! Faces of American Independence* offers a biographical look at the American Revolution as told through portraits, objects, and memorabilia from the war. The exhibit will be on view through May 24, 2005. This is a wonderful opportunity for SAR to hear the stories of the Revolution and life in Revolutionary America from the women and men, slaves and slave owners, sailors, Native Ameri-

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cans, French, and German soldiers who made up the diverse world of the American Revolution.

*Revolution! Faces of American Independence* explores four themes of the American Revolution: "Determine to Foment a Rebellion," highlights different definitions of freedom; "Desire to Demonstrate Our Bravery" examines the diversity and lives of the soldiers who fought in the Revolution; "We Left Off Firing and Gave Three Cheers" looks at privateers and spies; and "Zeal and Loyalty" investigates events of the Revolution that happened in upstate New York, specifically the Raid on Cherry Valley and the Sullivan-Clinton Campaign.

For those of you not familiar with Cooperstown or the Fenimore Art Museum, the Museum features premier collections of folk art, fine art, and North American Indian art. It is a must-see for any enthusiast of American art. Cooperstown is a picturesque, quintessential American village, home to The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, the Farmers' Museum, Glimmerglass Opera, and many more attractions. It is definitely worth a day trip!

Sincerely,

Christine Liggio  
Cooperstown Resident

*Oneida Nation Continued from Page 1*

example, was achieved with the help of a French army and a French navy which prevented the British from supplying or evacuating their soldiers.

Blessed with hindsight, it now seems that the prospects for ultimate American victory were bright after 1777 — provided the Americans avoided defeat in battle and maintained their army intact.

## THE ONEIDA WORLD

The American victories of 1777 were, therefore, decisive. The Oneidas played a key part in one of these triumphs and contributed significantly to the other. Had the Oneida Nation done nothing else during the Revolution, these contributions alone should have secured their place in American history.

By the time of the Revolution, Oneidas were being pressed hard by European-Americans. For many years, the newcomers were few in number, at some distance from the Oneidas, and focused on a greed for beaver pelts and animal skins. Now the European people were numerous and they were crowded along the border and even spilling into the Oneida homeland. Land had become the most sought after form of wealth and everyone, it seemed, wanted a piece of Oneida country.

Foreign pressure on the Oneida way of life occurred in other forms and increased steadily during the 1700s. Since the founding of Oswego as a military and trading post in the 1720s, a constant traffic of the roughest sort of non-Indian people moved across Oneida country. These encroachments intensified after the British erected Fort Stanwix in 1758. The Oneida response was practical, creative, and peaceful.

They adopted aspects of foreign life necessary for survival and useful for preserving their sovereignty and core traditions. They adapted to what was new in order to hold onto what was old.

Oneida men and women continued to follow the traditional ways of life. Women farmed extensive plots of corn, beans, and squash which surrounded the houses. Their realm was the hearth and the forest clearing and their standing was high because they owned the land and determined many key political decisions. “Our Ancestors considered them as of the soil. Our Ancestors said who bring us forth, who cultivate our lands, who kindles our fires and boil our pots, but the women”. The world of the men, in contrast was — as it always had been — the forest and the distance. Men were hunters, diplomats, and warriors.

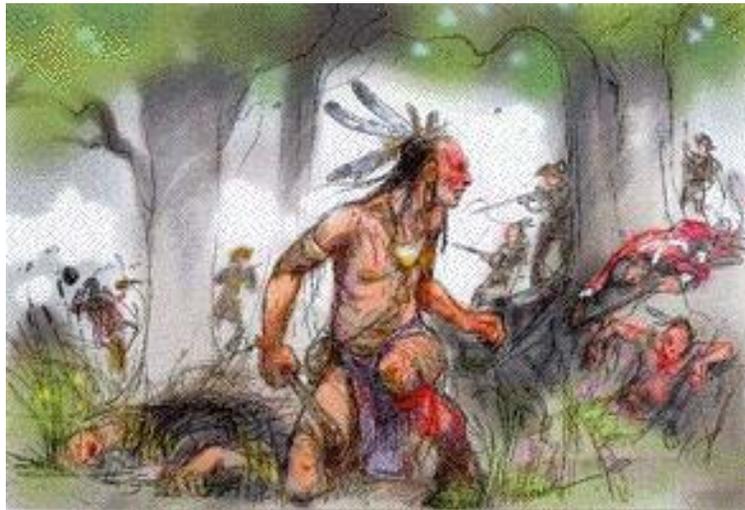
## TAKING SIDES

Haudenosaunee tradition holds that the council fire of the League at Onondaga was covered during the Revolution. Each nation was left free to follow its own course in the war. Most

Iroquois were drawn into the struggle; most ended up fighting on the British side for two reasons. First, the Haudenosaunee bitterly resented Yankee land-grabbing and Crown officials always promised they would guarantee Iroquois boundaries. Second, the British had a better supply system and could distribute more goods throughout the war. The Iroquois were a proud and independent people but they had reached a dangerous state of dependency on foreign-made goods. These were good reasons for the Oneidas also. Why did they choose the American side?

The Oneidas say they chose the cause of American liberty; they elected to fight on the American side. They were well informed on these issues. On several occasions groups of Oneida leaders toured eastern cities to determine, as they put it, the merits of the case. And their discussion of their merits of the case was ongoing. In 1779, for example, the American commander of Fort Stanwix reported how the Oneidas:”

*sat in council and every individual desired to declare his final resolution as to the part to be taken the present seeming crisis of their affairs. At the same time should any choose to join the enemy, free liberty was given to withdraw from their tribe... the result of their meeting was a unanimous resolution to stand by each*



*other in defense of their lives and liberty against any enemy that might be disposed to attack them...[T]hey would never violate their alliance with the American States, and though they would not be the aggressors or wantonly provoke any tribe to war, yet should be henceforth on their guard against any enemy whatsoever.”*

When Oneida opinions on the subject were recorded, they expressed themselves in this fashion:

*Brothers — In your late war with the people on the other side of the great water, and at a period when thick darkness overspread this country, your brothers the Oneidas stepped forth, and uninvited took up the hatchet in your defense; we fought by your side, our blood flowed together, and the bones of our warriors mingled with yours .”*

Lagwilondonwas (Good Peter), an important leader and public speaker, explained the Oneida commitment to the Americans in these words:

*“From the beginning of your troubles, in the late Revolution, to the time you publicly declared yourselves a free and independent people, I, my Nation, were a constant spectator — not only a constant spectator — but our minds united with yours in that final declaration; as all hopes of a reconciliation were then passed. The frequent & repeated declarations of the King, that the Americans with all who joined them, would be reduced to wretchedness, had no effect upon the minds of my Nation. And on the other hand, his promises of a rich reward, on condition of our adhering to his councils, did not excite covetous desires in us; but the love of peace, and the love of our land which gave us birth, supported our resolutions.”*

An interesting feature of the Oneida decision to aid the American colonists is touched on in the quote above. Choosing the patriot cause was against the material interest of the Oneida Nation and this was clear throughout the war to everyone concerned. As Lagwilondonwas stated in 1778:

*“[The Loyalist Iroquois] are wallowing in plenty, while we are pining in poverty and all this is occasioned by our attachment to you. Brothers — It is well known that the defection of part of our Confederacy is owing to the frequent presents made them by the King, but we are determined to adhere to you.”*



## THE COMING OF THE WAR

Pro-American Oneidas aided the colonists in various ways from the beginning of the shooting war in 1775. For example, in June of 1776, an Oneida named Cornelius reported on a diplomatic mission to Canada undertaken on behalf of the Americans. He had explained the patriot cause to Canadian Indians and sounded out their sentiments as possible allies. This probably was Suggoyonetau or He Brings Them in the House — a name which referred to the quality of his chiefly hospitality. Cornelius Suggoyonetau was a leader of the Wolf clan at the Oneida village of Oriska, Oriskany to English speakers. He was described as a short, thick-necked man with broad shoulders and, in less than a year, he would be fighting on the Oriskany battlefield near his home. Suggoyonetau (Henry Cornelius) would take up arms for the United States again in the War of 1812.

Americans feared invasion from Canada throughout much of 1776. Late that year, another Oneida leader brought accurate intelligence indicating there would be no attack that year. Ojstalak was a sachem (holder of a League office) in the Wolf clan. The Oneidas had nine such titles and they carried immense prestige. Ojstalak’s title (Otatshete) was considered to be the highest and, as a gifted public speaker (he spoke for the sachems in the council), he was a very influential man among the Oneidas. Strongly pro-American in outlook, Ojstalak had a great deal to do with the pro-American stand of the Oneidas during the war. It is likely that it was Ojstalak who, in 1778, declared his Nation’s “unalterable resolution” at every hazard, to hold fast the Covenant Chain with the United States, and with which to be buried in the same grave, or to enjoy the fruits of victory and peace.

In the summer of 1777, the British attack out of Canada was underway beginning with Burgoyne’s southern march toward Albany. Ticonderoga, an American strong point at Lake Champlain was captured without a fight in early July. American morale plummeted. Herkimer, the American commander of militia in the Mohawk Valley, reported that his troops refused to be called up.

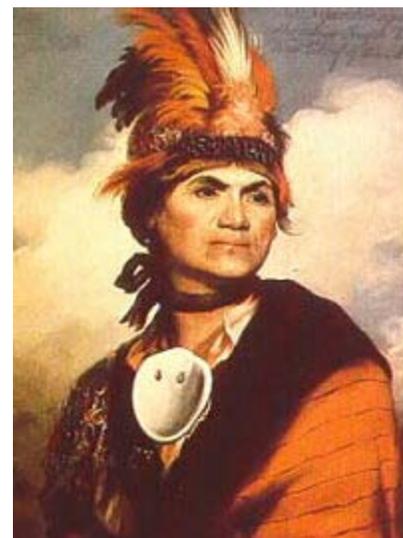
## ORISKANY, FORT STANWIX, SARATOGA

At about this point (in mid July) an Oneida returned from Canada to report the exact strength and timetable of the second enemy invasion. Thomas Sewajis (The Baptized One)— a young man appointed to one of the sachem titles of the Bear clan brought more than accurate military intelligence. Sewajis, who would not survive the war, harangued the Americans, encouraging them to show a little backbone:

*“Now is your time, brothers, to awake and not to sleep any longer or, on the contrary, it will go with Fort Stanwix as it went already to Ticonderoga. Brothers, I desire you to be spirited, and to encourage one another to march on in assistance of Fort Stanwix. Come up and show yourselves as men, to defend and save your country before it is too late... We, the good friends of the country, are [of] the opinion that, if more force appears at Fort Stanwix, the enemy will not move from Oswego to invade these frontiers. You may depend on [it], we are heartily willing to help you, if you will do some efforts too.”*

The first to encounter the British force approaching Fort Stanwix on Aug. 2, 1777 was an Oneida named Te-ga-swe-an-ga-lo-lus (the Saw Mill), Christian name Paulus. In later years, he would become a sachem of the Bear clan and his would be one of the Oneida signatures on the treaty with the United States at Canandaigua in 1794. But that day he was a young boy, a teenager from a small Oneida village Oriska or Oriskany. His story was remembered and related years later like this:

*Some Oneidas were inside the fort; the others outside a kets and spies. When [Paulus] was alone & in the woods some miles in advance of the fort, he discovered the enemy approaching in the distance— & they discovered him at the same time.*



*Brant [Thayendanega— Joseph Brant] hailed him— begged him to stop as he was in the act of retreating, pledging his honor that he should neither be hurt nor detained. So Paulus raised his gun & invited Brant to approach alone for an interview— as they then would be on an equality. But he ordered Brant as he neared him to halt a few steps off—*

*still presenting his gun, with his finger on the trigger— and bade Brant deliver whatever message he had to offer.*

*Oneida Nation Continued from Page 5*

Brant insinuatingly offered him a large reward & aplenty as long as he should live, if he would only join the King's side & induce other Oneidas to do so, & help the British to take Fort Stanwix. Paulus firmly rejected any such blandishments, saying he and his brother Oneidas had joined their fortunes with those of the Americans, & would share with them whatever good or ill might come. Brant portrayed the great & resistless power of the King, and professed to deplore the ruin of the Oneidas if they should foolishly and recklessly persist in their determination.

Paulus replied that he & the Oneidas would persevere, if need be, till all were annihilated; and that was all he had to say when each retired his own way. As Paulus hastened to the fort & reached his fellow Oneida pickets, the enemy had run with equal speed, and had commenced firing on the opposite side of the fort while Paulus and his companions were entering on the other— & had even to fight their way in. The British then began to dig to undermine the fort, to blow it up. Oneidas used to say, if they had not been there to aid in its defense, the fort might not have been saved."

A number of Oneidas were in the fort during the siege and, according to testimony given in 1877, "aided in driving off the British and Indians trying to undermine and blow up Fort Stanwix; Jacob Doxtator (son of Tehawengaragwen, see below) fought at the fort as did Clanis Kahiktoton who rendered "extraordinary service in going express from Fort Stanwix.

In the meantime, American volunteers of the Mohawk Valley (Tyron County Militia) were finally galvanized into action. to German Flatts ." A tremendous slaughter of Americans occurred during the opening minutes of the Battle of Oriskany on Aug. 6, 1777. Those who remained alive gathered into a circle around the commander Herkimer where they fought heroically the rest of the day. That is where Oneidas were. That day they joined the war, fighting beside Herkimer's band.

Perhaps the most famous was Te-haw-en-ga-rag-wen (Man with Snow Shoes)— another leader of the Oneida village at Oriskany usually called by English speakers Hanyerry or John Jury. Tehawengaragwen was remembered as a gentleman and fearless leader even though he was regarded as too old for military service. A contemporaneous newspaper reference to this battle describes: "a friendly Indian, with his wife and son, who distinguished themselves remarkably on that occasion. The Indian killed nine of the enemy, when, having receiving a ball through his wrist that disabled him from using his gun, fought with his tomahawk. His son killed two and his wife, on horseback, fought by his side with pistols during the whole action .

"That this was Tehawengaragwen and his wife,



Tyonajanegen, is confirmed by an account which originated with that lady:

"Hon Yerry was shot through the right wrist so as to disable him from loading his gun (he on horseback), when his wife repeatedly loaded it for him, & he managed to aim its contents at the enemy. He had a sword hanging by his side, indicative of his rank as a captain or war leader. His wife had a gun also and used it too in the fight. So she related, & and added that there was a good deal of close intermixing between Americans and British, and American and British Indians, & she could see the British all around."

Tehawengaragwen's half-brother, Tonyentagoyon (also called Platkopf and Henry Trathroop) also was another who fought heroically at Oriskany. In later years, Oneidas testified how this "very able warrior" had "particularly distinguished himself there — went three times through the fight, fighting with his tomahawk in a hand-to-hand fight, knocking right and left — a very famous warrior.... Much hard hand-to-hand fighting— Indians using spears and tomahawks."

Other Oneidas of the Oriska village known to have been present at this battle were Suggestonetau and a man named Towauahnoet (called John Jonson). Another man named Songhowaut (Henry Smith) may have been there and the remarkable woman Tyonajanegen fought beside her husband Tehawengaragwen. Later that day or the next, she rode east to the German Flatts spreading the sad news of the battle.

Meanwhile, another American force, a small one, was coming to the aid of the fort. Its commander, Benedict Arnold, was able to spread a rumor in the British camp to the

effect that Americans were far closer and more numerous than they were. This rumor was spread with Oneida help and it was effective because the Loyalist Indians were disgruntled. They disliked and distrusted the English commander St. Leger who had come unprepared for a major siege. And the Senecas, especially, were dispirited from losses suffered in the Oriskany battle. The British force evaporated in a sudden and disorderly retreat.

General Arnold requested the "faithful Oneidas" to harry and hurry the British which they did, "adding to the panic and speed" of their withdrawal ." According to Samuel Kirkland, two other Oneidas named Shonoghlego and Thaahnyongo performed "an important piece of service" at this time.

"Their carrying a letter at the request of the commandant of Fort Stanwix to Gen. Arnold to announce the retiring of the British troops from said fort. To perform this, with any safety, they were obliged to strike off southward of their own village to escape the scouts and reconnoitering parties of the enemy, & went even south of where my dwelling place is now [Clinton], & very narrowly escaped being taken when almost in sight of Gen. Arnold at the German Flatts ."

The British drew off from Fort Stanwix on August 21. A month later, Oneida warriors gathered in Albany to take up the hatchet in the American cause; that is, to formally declare war. Immediately, they were asked to join the American army battling Burgoyne around Saratoga.

They did this, according to an American account, *“with great alacrity, and with such dispatch as to reach General Gates before noon next day, and by night the remainder arrived at the camp, making in all near one hundred and fifty. They have already taken about 30 prisoners and intercepted some dispatches from Gen. Powel, commander at Ticonderoga .”*

After Oriskany and Fort Stanwix, the State of New York expressed its appreciation of the Oneidas: *“Resolved that the Oneida Nation are the allies of this State and that we shall consider any attack upon them as an attack upon our own People.”* In December, the American Congress gratefully addressed the Oneidas in these terms:

*“We have experienced your love, strong as the oak, and your fidelity, unchangeable as truth. You have kept fast hold of the ancient covenant chain and preserved it free from rust and decay, and bright as silver. Like brave men, for glory you despised danger. You stood forth in the cause of your friends and ventured your lives in our battles. While the sun and moon continue to give light to the world, we shall love and respect you. As our trusty friends, we shall protect you; and shall at all times consider your welfare as our own .”*

That portion of the Oneida Nation which proffered its help to the United States during these crucial battles was not large — perhaps 1,000 or fewer, counting everybody. It would be difficult to identify a group of comparable size anywhere who contributed more to American victory in 1777. ■

**“Reprinted with permission, Oneida Indian Nation.”**

## MILITIAMAN RETURNS HOME 30 YEARS AFTER ORISKANY

*By William Loveday, Waloomsac Battle Chapter*

On the hot and humid day of August 6, 1777, the bloodiest battle of the Revolutionary War was waged along the King’s Highway and in the ravines and hills of Oriskany. The Tryon County Militia lost about 450 men who were killed, wounded and captured out of a force of 760 militiamen. The Tories, British Regulars, Rangers and Indians, led by Sir John Johnson, John Butler and Joseph Brant, lost about 200 of 700 combatants.

There were countless stories of bravery, slaughter and survival recorded after the famous battle, but one of the more interesting was not fully disclosed until 30 years later.

Petrus Groot, a distant cousin of mine, was a soldier in the 3rd Tryon County Militia Regiment, born March 7, 1744, and raised in an area near the Mohawk River called Adriutha by the Mohawks, later called Crane’s Village, and today called Cranesville, just east of Amsterdam, N.Y.. He had married his cousin, Neeltje Groot, and they had two young children;

Annatje, born in 1773, and Philippus, born 1776. Historian authors Jephtha Simms and Nelson Greene list his rank as Lieutenant, while other historians list him as a Private.

During the Battle of Oriskany, Petrus was reported to have been tomahawked, severely wounded by stabbing, and scalped,

but still captured alive during the British ambush. Some years later, Peter Ehle, a private in the 1st Tryon County Militia, arrived home from captivity in Canada and reported that he had seen both Petrus Groot and Sgt. Andrew Cunningham *“captured at Oriskany and murdered at Woods Creek near Fort Stanwix- slices of their thighs being roasted and feasted upon by the savages, with zest and mirth”*. Based upon this report of his death, both of Petrus’ children received pensions. His wife, family and other relatives resigned themselves to his being dead and gone forever.

It seems that the report of his death, however, had been somewhat exaggerated. In the Spring of 1807, 30 years after the battle, Judge John Sanders of Schenectady came upon a wandering Petrus just west of Schenectady and, recognizing him, took action to reunite him with his family. Unfortunately, before he could do so, Petrus once again disappeared. The following is a copy of an ad taken out by Judge Sanders in the Albany Gazette in 1807 in an attempt to again locate Petrus:

**“Schenectady, June 8, 1807**

*On Thursday, the 4th instant, about four miles from the city of Schenectady, aside the Mohawk Turnpike, sitting under a tree, I discovered Petrus Groot, who was supposed to have been slain in the Oriskany battle under Gen. Herkimer on the 6th of August, 1777. I immediately recognized him, and on conversing with him, he confessed himself to be the person I took him to be. I then carried him to the nearest tavern where I left him to be sent to his children and brothers; from whence, however, he departed before day the next morning, and was seen in Albany on Friday. His mental faculties are much impaired, supposed to have been occasioned by the wound of a tomahawk near the fore part of his head, though he is at most times tolerably rational. His head is bald - the circle or scar of the scalping knife is plainly seen on it, and a stab wound on the side of his neck near his shoulder, and has a small scar near his ankle - is a middle sized man, has blue eyes, a long countenance, and stoops much in the shoulders. He speaks English, French, Dutch and Indian, and says he has been last a prisoner among the Indians north of Quebec - had on an old gray coat and old brownish Dutch pantaloons; has a large pack with him.*

*He refuses to go home, as one of his former neighbors whom he saw would not recognize him, and he was fearful that his children and brothers would not, also. He said he would go to the governors. Being at times deranged, it is feared he will stray too far away for his friends to find him. He is of a very respected family and connections.*

*Any person who will take him up and bring him to the subscriber, at Schenectady, shall be well compensated for his care and trouble, and will receive the sincere thanks of his children and relatives, and be the means of relieving this poor unfortunate man from his distress by restoring him to his family and friends. John Sanders”.*

History has not revealed whether Petrus was relocated and reunited with his family as the result of Judge Sanders’ kindness, but we can only hope that he was, even though he was a broken relic of the man that they had last seen in 1777. I doubt very much that the reunion ever took place, however, as an event of that importance would have been a significant news item even in those early days and would have been passed on as history.

➤ Page 8 Column 1

Capture and enslavement by Indians seems to have run in the Groot Family Line. The father of Petrus was Lodovicus (Lewis) Groot, who married Annatje Van Antwerpen, and also lived on the family land at Crane's Village. In the Summer of 1755, he was captured on his land by Northern Indians and taken to Canada to perform slave labor for the tribe. After four years and four months captivity by the Indians and imprisonment by the French, he was released and returned home to his wife and 10 children, one of whom was Petrus.

The father of Lodovicus was Philip Groot, who was the original Groot owner of the family land at Crane's Village with his wife, Sara Peeck (Peek). Sara was the granddaughter of the famous early New Amsterdam settler, trader and tavernkeeper, Jan Peeck (peek), who established a trading post on the Hudson river in the mid-1600's which took his name and eventually became the Village of Peekskill. Philip also was a captive of the French Indians in Canada as a boy along with his four brothers, Symon, Jr., Abraham, Dirk and Claas. All five brothers were taken alive on the frigid night of Feb. 8, 1690, when the French and Indian raiding party massacred about half the residents of Schenectady. All five brothers were very fortunate to have first survived the massacre, second to survive the march to Canada through deep snow and subzero temperatures, and thirdly to be released from captivity in just over a year and to have all returned home safely.

Philip, unfortunately, drowned in the Mohawk River while sledding to survey his recently acquired lands at Adriutha in the Winter of 1716. His wife and 3 sons, including Lodovicus, cleared, settled and developed the rich farmland without him.

The parents of Philip and his nine siblings were Symon Symonse Groot and Rebecca du Trieux (Truax), my seventh great-grandparents. Symon was the first Groot immigrant to arrive on these shores from the Netherlands, and came over as a working boatswain on the Dutch ship "Prince Maurice" which was in the service of the Dutch West India Trading Company. Rebecca was the daughter of French Huguenot exiles to the Netherlands, Philippe du Trieux and his second wife, Susanna du Chesne, who were among the first eight families to arrive on the tip of Manhattan aboard the Dutch ship, "Nieuw Nederlandt" in 1624, and who were also among the first permanent settlers of New Amsterdam two years later when Gov. Pieter Minuit, also a French Huguenot, arrived, bought Manhattan Island for 60 guilders, and founded the village. After offloading the eight families, the "Nieuw Nederlandt" continued up the Mauritius (later the Hudson) River with 19 more Huguenot families who were destined to become the first permanent settlers of New Netherlands and who also built the first permanent settlement which they diplomatically named Fort Orange after Maurice, the Prince of Orange and ruler of The Netherlands.

Philippe du Trieux and his son, Philippe, Jr. were not known to be Indian prisoners, but both were killed by Indians in Manhattan in about 1653.

All of this Groot Family background is interesting, but the resurrection of Petrus from the dead 30 years after the Battle of Oriskany is not the end of this interesting and well documented story.

A 1935 article from an unidentified newspaper which I recently located reported that literary sleuths have determined and agreed among themselves that the almost unbelievable but true saga of Petrus Groot was in fact the basis for early writer

Washington Irving's famous "Rip Van Winkle" story. It seems that author Irving had passed his New York State bar exams in 1806 and was practicing law in the Schenectady/Albany area when Judge John Sanders, who he undoubtedly knew, discovered Petrus resting under a tree on the Turnpike in 1807. Sanders' ad in the Albany Gazette could not have escaped Irving's attention during that early time period and, with his noted knack for twisting the truth to achieve a great story, converted the inspiring story of Petrus into Rip's 20 year snooze in the Catskills.

The authors of the 1935 article conclude that Washington Irving "took many liberties" with the true story of Petrus Groot, but they still found a thread of indisputable similarities between the true tale and Irving's story of "Rip Van Winkle". In the beginning of the written sketch, Rip Van Winkle hikes into the Catskill Mountains to temporarily escape the wrath of his domineering and abusive wife, Dame Van Winkle. There he met "a company of odd-looking personages, playing at ninepins. They were dressed in quaint, outlandish fashion; some wore short doublets, others jerkins, with long knives at their belts, and most with enormous Dutch breeches". This description of the clothing worn could easily have fit the nondescript, homemade clothing worn by the militia farmers at Oriskany. Remember that when Judge Sanders first encountered Petrus, he found him "outlandishly dressed in a tattered old gray coat and old brownish Dutch pantaloons", not an uncommon way of dressing 30 years before 1807.

The "company of odd looking personages" was led by a "commander" who was a "stout old gentleman, with a weatherbeaten countenance", a fitting description of General Herkimer, a farmer himself, who led the Tryon County Militia at Oriskany.

Irving also described the ninepin players as "maintaining the gravest faces and a mysterious silence nothing interrupted the stillness of the scene but the noise of the balls, which whenever rolled, echoed along the mountains and ravines like rumbling peals of thunder". Men fighting for their lives in an ambush of the magnitude encountered at Oriskany would naturally be deadserious and appear grave and silent, while all around them would be the deafening roar of blackpowder guns firing and echoing among the hills and ravines so famous at Oriskany.

After Rip awoke after 20 years (literary critics believe the author shortened the period from 30 years to better fit his romantic tale of Rip), he was met in his village by a "knowing, self-important old gentleman" who was undoubtedly meant to represent Judge Sanders who was the first to recognize and quiz Petrus and tried to restore him to his family. Petrus, in the real-life saga, was also recognized by innkeeper Simon Van Patten to whom the Judge entrusted him for the night before Petrus slipped away. Similarly, Rip was recognized and put up for the night by an innkeeper, Nicholas Vedder, in Irving's tale.

Finally, in reading "Rip Van Winkle", one will note the predominance of Mohawk Valley names, with only one or two of the names such as Van Winkle prevalent in the Catskill Region. Irving lived in the Hudson Valley/Catskill Region, but was very familiar with the Mohawk Valley and it's people because he commuted frequently to Johnstown, N.Y. where his two sisters lived with their families. He knew the people of the Mohawk Valley because of his frequent travels through the region.

## CHAPTER SUPPORTS MARCH FOR PARKS

The story of Petrus Groot has all but been forgotten by historians with the notable exception of Jephtha Simms in "Frontiersmen of New York", Nelson Greene in "The History of the Mohawk Valley, Gateway to the West", and in the recorded genealogical records of the Groot family. I might add that many historians, including Washington Frothingham, a close relative of Irving's, have repeatedly claimed that the Groots were of German origin, and even changed the spelling of the name to Groat, but excellent Dutch records have dispelled this claim. Symon Symonse Groot, the progenitor of all early Groots in this country, was as Dutch as a Dutchman could be.

The story of Petrus Groot and the sacrifices which he and his family made for their ideals and visions of a free country should never be forgotten in history. Times were tough wherever you lived in the new land during the 1600's and 1700's, and it took a strong breed of men and women to survive here. In the case of Petrus Groot, he and his fledgling family chose to live near the frontier, but this choice and the choice to fight for independence cost him his health and many of the best years of his life, and left his wife alone with two small children to raise while facing the hazards and dangers of the frontier. In effect, Petrus and his family were emblematic of all the patriots, both men and women, who risked everything to fight for what they believed in liberty and the free country of their dreams.

William G. Loveday, Jr.

## SARATOGA BATTLE CHAPTER

*Jonathan E. Goebel Elected New Chapter President*

The Chapter held its annual meeting and Washington's Birthday Dinner at the Century House in Latham on Saturday evening, February 19th. Forty-three members and their guests gathered for a delicious meal and a fun filled evening.

Following dinner and short business meeting, Past Chapter President Rick Saunders announced the slate of officers for the 2005-2007 term. No nominations were placed on the floor and the nominated candidates were elected.

Past Chapter President Lewis O. Slocum performed the installation of officers. In addition to Jonathan Goebel; Richard Fullam was elected 1st Vice President and Treasurer; George Ballard, 2nd Vice President; Stephen Coye, Secretary; Duane Booth, Registrar; Dennis Marr, Genealogist & Historian, Peter Goebel, Chaplain and Henry Goebel, Assistant Chaplain.

Following the election of officers, Distinguished Professor of History, Sung Bok Kim, at the University of Albany gave an excellent presentation entitled "Why did the British loose in the American Revolutionary War?"



*Chapter President Duane Booth (second from left) with new Saratoga Battle Chapter Members left to right Peter Lindemann, Larry Winslow, Timothy Condor, John McDermott and James McDermott*



*Past Chapter President Duane Booth receives his Past President's Pin and Certificate from newly elected and installed President Jonathan E Goebel*

## NEWTOWN BATTLE CHAPTER PRESIDENT'S REPORT

During the January 2005 chapter meeting Newtown Battle elected their new Officers and the names of 17 newly approved members were read. The Chapter membership continues to grow and plans are in the making for our first Membership Handbook. Through the artistic talents of Chapter Treasurer Sam Pulford we have a beautiful cover designed and we are currently updating all the member information to have this handbook ready very soon.

Compatriots Sheldon Robinson and Samuel Pulford continue to work on a project for making The Knoll Cemetery nationally recognized as the final resting place of the first Patriots killed at the Battle of Newtown. Their efforts and the help of others interested in locating the burial places of these Patriots proved successful and plans are in the making for the placing of a monument at this site. The grave site of Lt. Nathaniel McCauley of Litchfield, New Hampshire is believed to have been located as was another site which possibly contained the remains of four other Soldiers - one being Cpl. Adam Hunter. Comp. Pulford has also produced a booklet containing information about the Knoll Cemetery and they can be obtained by contacting him.

Newtown Battle will be joining Buffalo, Chautauqua, and Rochester Chapters during a joint April meeting in welcoming the new Finger Lakes Chapter. At this time the new Chapter will be "officially" installed and also presented with their Charter.

New York State has taken over "control" of Newtown Battlefield Park - and has already made some changes in the way it will be operated since Chemung County was in charge. As a result of this change, Newtown Battle Chapter's annual picnic may be changed to a different location, but we will keep you informed of this, if it happens.

Our Chapter will again be presenting the 3 ROTC Awards on April 30, 2005 during the ceremony being held at Cornell University. These awards had been presented on behalf of the former Tompkins County Chapter by Compatriots Everett Morse and Fleet Morse. I believe that their father also had started this annual "presentation tradition" and then his sons continued with it. The combined years of service of these two members to the SAR, which include many Officer positions during the former Tompkins County Chapter tenure, total over 100+ years. They have been honored by the Newtown Battle Chapter with SAR Meritorious Service Medal and will be recognized at the upcoming ESSAR Western Region meeting for their many accomplishments and dedication to the SAR organization. They currently are both active members of the newly established Finger Lakes Chapter and continue to regularly participate as well as offer advice. They are an asset to the new Chapter and the SAR.

Congratulations again to our newly approved members and "welcome to the club". Thanks for your interest in the SAR and your desire to become members as well as keeping alive the History of your Patriot Ancestors who helped in the founding of this Country.

*William J Woodworth, Chapter President* ■

## NEW TOWN BATTLE CHAPTER, SAR

447 Brainard Place. Painted Post, New York 14870-1101  
Home Phone 607-962-829. Email billsue3@juno.com

Dear Compatriots,

Newtown Battle Chapter will be hosting the May 2005 ESSAR Annual Board of Managers Meeting which will be held at the Beeches in Rome, NY on May 14, 2005 at 10:30 AM with the business meeting beginning at 11:00 AM.

James N. Randall - Executive Director of National Society, SAR has contacted me and asked to attend. Ms. Megan Weigard - NYSSCAR State President and Ms. Cynthia Babb - NYSSCAR Senior State President have been invited if convenient for their schedule.

Luncheon menu choices will consist of the following items;  
**Chicken Cordon Bleu, Baked Haddock,  
Petite Cut Prime Rib**

All meals include: Tossed salad; Hot Assorted Rolls; Potato or Rice; Hot Vegetable; Dessert, Coffee, Tea, or Milk  
Cost will be \$17.00 per person gratuity and tax incl.  
Reservations are needed by May 5, 2005.

Please make checks payable to:  
"NEWTOWN BATTLE CHAPTER, SAR" Mail to:  
Samuel R. Pulford, Treasurer  
Newtown Battle Chapter, SAR  
289 Front Street  
Owego, New York 13827-1603 ■

### FROM THE EDITOR

Compatriots,

I had a little mishap on the ice on March 9 requiring surgery on my leg with a short stay in the Hospital and then to a Nursing Home for Physical Therapy. I came home on April 7th with my leg in a full brace which inhibits my mobility somewhat. However, I am trying my best to get this issue to you as soon as possible - mainly for the above notice of the May 14th Annual Board of Managers Meeting. I am writing this on April 10th and still have to get it to the printer, then to the mail sorter and then mailed to you. Hopefully the Post Office will get it to you on a timely basis. Thank You for your patience.

Hank Croteau, Editor ■

## COLUMBIA CHAPTER

Columbia Chapter Presiden, John Helmeyer attended an Eagle Scout Court of Eagles program April 2, 2005 as guest speaker representing the Empire State Society Sons of the American Revolution. Austin Dugger of Troop 33, Pleasant Valley, New York was honored as Eagle Scout and was presented with his SAR Eagle Scout Certificate and Patch before an assembly of 200 Scouts, Scout Leaders and Parents by President Helmeyer. Austin is the son of Columbia Chapter Compatriot Wayne Dugger. The entire program lasted about one and a half hours.

*John Helmeyer, President* ■

# THE STORY OF POLLY COOPER

The Polly Cooper Shawl is one of the greatest relics of the Oneida People. Linked to it is the story of George Washington's sick and starving army wintering at Valley Forge in 1777-78. The suffering was relieved by an Oneida gift of corn organized by Chief

played a key role in the most important American victory of the war, the repulse of British invasions at Fort Stanwix and Saratoga in 1777. They certainly aided Washington's army at Valley Forge.

To date, non-Native written sources neither confirm nor deny the Polly Cooper story. However, we do know that an Oneida woman called Polly Cooper by English speakers was alive during the Revolution and did serve again as a cook in the American cause during the War of 1812. Later, they fought beside New York soldiers in several battles of the Mohawk Valley. The sacrifices they made in the American cause of liberty were enormous.

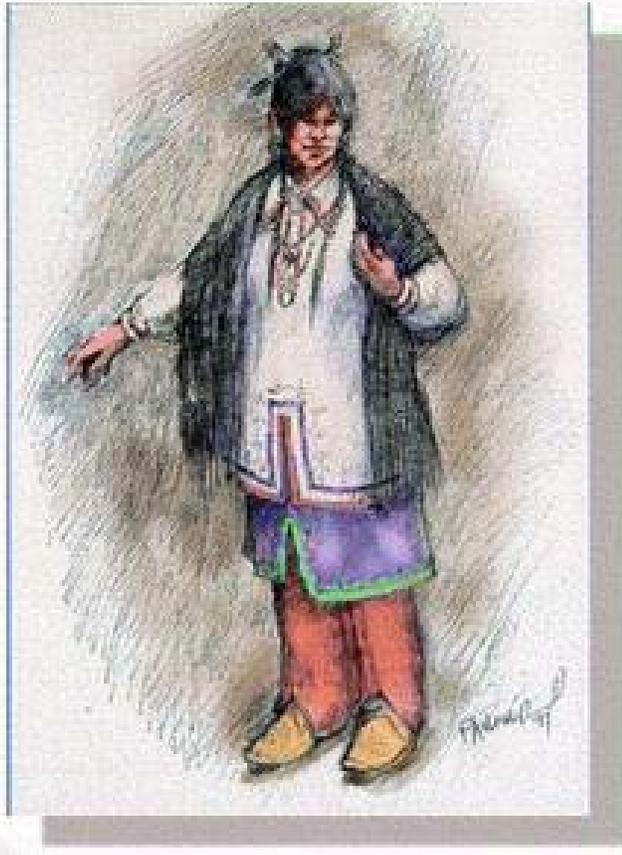
They lost the lives of perhaps a third or more of their people. After losing their homes, they lived as refugees for four years enduring hunger, smallpox, and lack of adequate clothing and shelter. We also know that the tradition of Polly Cooper is very old locally and goes back to those with living memory of those times. William Honyost Rockwell (1870-1960), an important Oneida leader earlier in this century, heard the story of his ancestor Polly Cooper when he was a small child.

Chief Rockwell knew the tradition of Skenandoah, corn, and Valley Forge but he emphasized parts of the story which held the richest meaning for him. He stressed Cooper's bravery and selflessness in a righteous cause. Above all, he understood it as a parable for the traditional matriarchal wisdom of his people. Chief Rockwell wrote about his ancestor Polly Cooper several times between the 1930's and 1950's. The following account has been compiled from his two longest passages on the subject. The unpublished Rockwell Papers are owned by the Oneida Indian Nation.

George Washington is called the father of this country; an Indian woman of the Oneida Nation should be called the mother of this country. Her name was Polly Cooper. She cooked for George Washington and his staff of officers when they were located in Philadelphia. Polly Cooper would not accept cash payment for her part in the Revolutionary War. Isn't that just like what a mother does for her children?

So the wives of the officers invited Polly Cooper to take a walk downtown with them. As they were looking in the store

►Page 12 Column 1

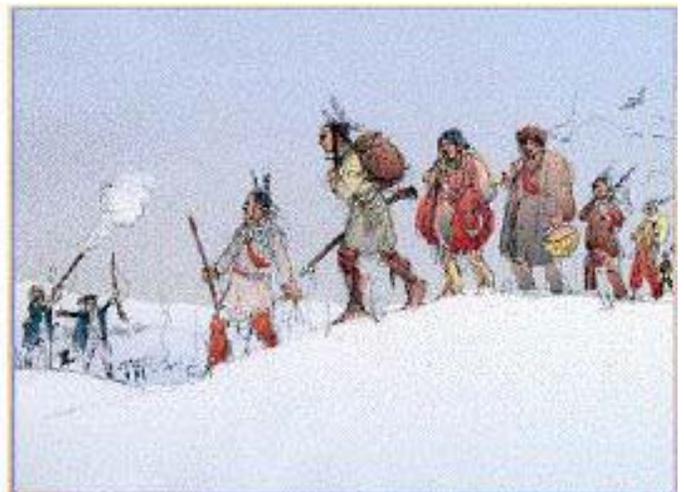


Skenandoah. An Oneida woman, Polly Cooper, stayed to help the soldiers and to teach them how to prepare the nutritional and medicinal food. Refusing to take money in payment, Cooper did accept this shawl in token of Washington's gratitude.

This story is at the heart of Oneida oral tradition passed down through the generations. It expresses the unswerving friendship and timely aid offered by the Oneidas in the most perilous hour of the United States.

It also symbolizes the relationship between the Oneidas and the United States. In times past, any agreement of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) was accompanied by a gift; usually it was wampum but it might be an animal skin or textile also. The gift was tied to the words of the message and the object underlined the truth and importance of the words. So it is with the shawl. As memorial to the American acknowledgment of Oneida help and sacrifice, the Polly Cooper Shawl testifies to a pact of the Revolutionary War in the traditional Haudenosaunee way.

The Shawl is also an icon of neglected and little known history. From non-Native documentary sources it is clear that the Oneidas contributed greatly to the birth of the American nation. Oneidas



*Conclusion - Polly Cooper*

windows, Polly saw a black shawl on display that she thought was the best article. When the women returned to their homes, they told their husbands what Polly saw that she liked so well. Money was appropriated by congress for the purpose of the shawl, and it was given to Polly Cooper for her services as a cook for the officers of the Continental Army. The shawl is still owned by members of the Oneida Nation, descendants of Polly Cooper.

When I was a boy, I used to hear people talk about Polly Cooper's bravery, about how she cooked and carried water to the soldiers. Whenever she had a chance between the hours of cooking duty, Polly would roll up her sleeves and take two pails of water, one container in each hand, and go into the battlefield. She would give water to quench the dry throats of the soldiers on either side and she walked on both sides of the firing line without fear of harm. Polly cooper gave water to the enemy soldiers as well as to the men in the colonial army because she believed the war was not over water or food. She knew that, when the war was over, people would continue to have all the water and food they needed no matter which side won. Polly knew the war was about freedom in thought, to develop principles for the good of all living and the

coming generations.

Polly Cooper's thoughts were that all men, no matter what country they were fighting for, they all had mothers. And the mothers

didn't send their sons out to kill other mothers' sons. All the old Indian people I heard talk 50 years, 60 years, and 70 years ago favored the mothers' right to govern people. Mothers carried the child before it was born. They nursed and cared for it in every way so that the infant knew the hands that held it were a dependable love.

Before the Europeans came into the country, the Iroquois women were the heads of domestic affairs.

Since they took upon themselves the responsibilities of the home, it was therefore very natural they should have the right to govern home affairs. I support the good judgment of my Iroquois ancestors who yielded to womanhood for love and a peaceful government (William Rockwell).

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