

SIMMONS FAMILY

READING ROOM

~~MISCELLANEOUS COLLECTION~~

This was the summer of 1777. The Colonists had been in open rebellion for two years. In 1775 a rebel force attempted to capture Quebec. They besieged the city through the following winter, but retired hastily when a British fleet arrived before the city. By November, 1776, the rebels had been driven south by way of Lake Champlain, and the British under General Carleton ended the campaign by the occupation of Crown Point. In the spring of 1777, a British army under General Burgoyne advanced slowly in the direction of Albany and the Hudson Valley. The Loyalists, who had been persecuted, fined and imprisoned, flocked to the Royal Standard as Burgoyne proceeded southward.

And now to the details of Lieut. Simmons' Journal.

The Sixteenth Day of August 1777 I Left my hous at Claverack and Sat out With a Campiny of Seven and twenty Men and officers to go to Genneral Burguins army Which Was at that time at fort Miller and Arifet at the Batten Kill in the flyeing arme the 27th of augt¹ and Was musteret that Same Day and Joint Lt. Co. Je Saups Corps² till fur ther ourder and there we Lay till the 1t of Septr the 29th Chrichtyan havver and Pardlomees Hess Went home to gitt more men. the 8th of Sept we gat arms for 12 men³ and thath night we was Alarmet as if the Enmy Was a Comming But it Was a

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1. 75 miles in 11 days! They had to travel through enemy country, likely at night along untrodden paths, fording streams, and hiding in thickets by day. Their food was what they could carry on their backs.
 2. The King's Loyal American Regiment, commended by Lieut.-Col. Jessup. Simmons became Lieutenant in Capt. Christian Wehr's Company.
 3. They must have been a motley crew--no uniforms, and only 12 of them armed.

fals Larm the Nest night we Lay an our Arms on the Est of the Barracks the 10th we gat armes for 9 men more the 13th we Movet town⁴ as fare as Shullers uper Sawmill⁵ and there We lay till the 16th and that Day we went to Von fechteis⁶ and ther we lay one Day and the 18th we went to Leut Sworts hous⁷ and there we lay till the 19th till som time in the night and then we went that night to John Doyleos⁸ and that Day our flying Arme and the Rebels had a Batle at free mans farme⁹ But our men Boit the Rēbels to Keterin and Kilt Betwin 3 and 4 hundaert of the Enmy and we had about two hundret Deat and Wountet the eeth of Sept Christyan Haver and Hess Came in agin and Brought 18th men with them and A Commetee man PreSsoner¹⁰ and so we Lay there till the 7th Day of ocdr they hat and other Batle West of fremens¹¹ and our arme Retreecat that next Day Back to John Daylors on the hill and that Day Engaget with Canons But how manny was killet of eithere Sit I can not Say and the 8th we Wend in the night as fare as Vnfechtes and¹² the 9th in the night to Saratogo¹³ there we Lay that night

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4. Having crossed the Hudson to the west bank on a bridge of boats.
 5. This is General Schuyler's Upper Sawmill, evidently on the Fishkill stream.
 6. Von Fechten's house, a few miles south of Saratoga Village.
 7. Lieutenant Sword's house
 8. John Taylor's house.
 9. The battle of Freeman's Farm, also known as the first battle of Saratoga.
It was fought in the cornfields and fence rows of John Freeman, a Loyalist.
 10. Haver and Hess were absent 23 days, 29 August to Sept. 22, in making the round trip to Claverack for these 18 men. Simmons now commanded 45 men.
 11. This was the second battle of Saratoga, also called the battle of Bemis Heights. Failure to rout the Rebels led to Burgoyne's retreat and subsequent surrender.

the 10th Went Back agin about a mile Som of the Vallutiers and gartet up the Batowes to the fish Kill at Schullers¹⁴ and the Sam Day we wend as fare as arche mcnelas to cover the Artificers for to-mack Briges¹⁵ and there we lay two Days the 12th we wend Back agin to flying arme which lay on the hill north of the fish Kill and there we lay until the 17th and that Day we layt ~~own~~ our arms by Capitulations and in the Convenon It was agreed that the Volunteer Saillors artyficirs batone men must go to Canada¹⁶ and so we Croset the Rever that Day and wend as fare as Bathen Kill¹⁷ the 18th to one Johnson and the 20th to fort Gorge¹⁸ and we lay there till the 22 th a boud one a klok and then wend as fare as the three mile paint and there we lay thed

12. From September 13th, when the Army crossed the Hudson River, to October 7th, the day on which the second battle of Saratoga was fought, Burgoyne's advance was about ten miles.
13. This refers to the hill just north of the Fishkill and the village of Saratoga where Burgoyne encamped for protection. Being here completely surrounded and short of supplies, the British were forced to surrender.
14. To guard the return of batteaux which had descended the Hudson as the army advanced.
15. This took Simmons' party to the neighborhood of Fort Edward.
16. By the terms of surrender all Americans who had joined Burgoyne must proceed to Canada. There was nothing else to do. All their property had been confiscated.
17. Thus began the long and tedious trip to Canada, their future home.
18. From the Battenkill to Fort George was 27 miles. The party averaged 9 miles per day.

night and the 23th we Came on Dimon Ill and and took a Butiacker¹⁹ and Came that Day to the nine mile Iland thence the 24 within five mil of Sabath day pind and the 25th to Diante rogo²⁰ and there lay till the 26th the Sund about one hour hight and there we gat a batone²¹ And wend that Day a boud 8 mille the Wind in the North and there we lay Still the 27th and 28th in the woods and a Storrm from the north With Snow and a little Rain²² and 29th we wend as fare as one Mcelens there we came about noon the wind stle in the north and it Rainth that afternoon and the next night the next Day the Wind Came to the South and wend from thence the 29th as fare as Split Rock²³ there we lay wind Bound from the 30 and 31th the 1th Day of Ocdowner²⁴

19. How the party was transported to Diamond Island is not known. But once there they boarded a Butiacker for the journey northward. I have been unable to discover what a Butiacker was, except that it must have been a vessel of some kind.
20. They took three days to sail from Fort George to Ticonderoga, a distance of some 37 miles; the last leg, a matter of three miles, must have been on foot.
21. A batteau ordinarily carried about 20 men, so it must have been very crowded with 28 men.
22. This must have been a most dispiriting time. It was now the last week in October, and snow and rain arriving on a north wind can create a most distressing situation.
23. Split Rock is about 30 miles north of Ticonderoga, the traditional dividing line between the Iroquois and the Indians of the Lower St. Lawrence.
24. This must be November.

the wind Came a boud to the South and that Day we Sailed as fare as the East Poind of mon comberlands pay²⁵ and the 2th from thence five mile to the north of point to faire²⁶ the 3th about noon we arift at Saint Johns²⁷ and there we lay that night in the woods and 4 we wend about nine milles there we layet with Som french men the 5th we wend within a boud 1 mile of Labarens²⁸ the 6th we wend to Lang gale²⁹ and we Caute not git overe the Revere we was appeaghtet to Stay there that night the 7th we got over and that night we was billetet in the west Suppub of Montreal³⁰ the 8th we wend up to Lachenne³¹ there we stayt that night the 9th we was billetet in St SuSe³² the 23th of Novemr We Drowe half Mounding for the Men³³

25. They had made 30 miles that day, the best since leaving Saratoga.

26. Pointe au Fer (Iron Point). The party had travelled more than 80 miles by water since leaving Ticonderaga eight days before. They were now about to enter the Richelieu River which drains Lake Champlain.

27. St. John's, the first French community and outpost, 24 miles north of Lake Champlain. There was no room at the inn nor in the stables. So they slept in the woods, and in November.

28. This must be Laprairie, a village on the south shore of the St. Lawrence.

29. Longueuil, across the river from Montreal.

30. Almost four months had elapsed since leaving their homes in Claverack, and three weeks since their departure from Saratoga. They were now in a foreign land, as far as speech was concerned, and 275 miles from homes and families.

31. Lachine.

32. St. Suse must be St. Louis, and evidently a community on Lake St. Louis, west of Lachine.

33. Apparently the usual issue to destitute groups.

St. Sous December 29th John Stopilbin Did and their we Staid till the 26th of May 1778 and then we Set out for Quebeck We Marcht as for as Montrial Staid thare un tel the 29th Day then Crosed the Rever St Larence to long ale Church³⁴ Staid thare one Day and two Nights then the 31 Day Wee Came to Verene³⁵ Staid thare that Night then the 1 Day of June wee Marcht Down to Sorell and Retournd back one mill that Night Staid thare And the next morn- ing wee marcht up two mill---further and Crosd the Rever to Barkee³⁶ Staid thare that Night and the 3 Day Wee whent in bottoms and Roed Down Leak St. frances³⁷ to St. Anns wee Staid thare that Night and the 4 Day wee Come over the three Revers³⁸ and the 5 wee marcht to -----³⁹ Wee Staid thare that Night and the 6 Day Wee marcht to pont oShambo⁴⁰ and the 7 day wee Marcht to Carruse fery⁴¹ Staid thare that night and the Next Day and Night and the 9 Day⁴²

34. Longueuil Church.

35. Varennes, on the south shore road to Sorel.

36. This is Berthier, on the north shore.

37. This should be Lake St. Peter. Lake Francis is west of Montreal.

38. The journey from Three Rivers downward was on foot.

39. The Lieutenant was stumped at this point. He left a blank for this over- night resting place. It was likely Ste. Anne-de-La Perade.

40. Deschambeault.

41. Cap Rouge, a few miles west of Quebec City.

42. The party arrived in Quebec on the 9th, after a leisurely trip of about 180 miles in two weeks. Today, in your car you could complete the journey in five or six hours.

Thus ends Lieutenant Simmons' Journal.

And what of the men who followed Lieut. Simmons into exile? We have the answer on page 69 of his Orderly Book. It reads:

October 3th I did arjved in Cannada with

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| 1. John Simmon Set. | 15. fridrich becker |
| 2. gord Raus | 16. Pitter Eisselstein |
| 3. Wil Sol | 17. John Eisselstein |
| 4. Henry finckel | 18. John Meikel |
| 5. Balser Simmon | 19. Pitter Hagetorn |
| 6. Henry Enderson | 20. Vallendin Herman |
| 7. Jacob Bonistiel | 21. David Hofman |
| 8. Andres Miller | 22. Jost Hofman |
| 9. Aberm Reyfeberger | 23. Philip Bonistiel |
| 10. Pitter Stieuer | 24. John Bork |
| 11. Jacob Hes | 25. John Schertz |
| 12. Conrath Rosman | 26. Matis Runs |
| 13. Nickles Hofman | 27. John Lieb |
| 14. Aberm Scot | |

The War Office Papers in the Archives in Ottawa supplies the ages of most of these men. Nine were in their teens, the youngest being Jacob Hess at seventeen; ten were in their twenties; four were thirty or more; and five were unknown. Simmons himself was 37. One of these, Sgt. Rouse, did not come from Claverack. He joined the Company early in September, 1777.

Eleven of these men became settlers in Ernesttown in June, 1784. They were Lieut. Simmons, Sgt. John Simmons, Baltus Simmons, Henry Finkle, Andrew Miller, Jacob Hess, Frederick Baker, John and Peter Asselstine and David and Joseph Huffman. Pieter Stiever died in June, 1783.

If it should possibly anger you because of my failure to supply the actual age in the Summer of 1777, I add the ages of these budding soldiers as they appear on 1 January, 1782, or 1783, ~~as they appear~~ in the War Office Papers to be found, if you so desire, in the Public Archives in Ottawa, Canada.

Here is the list, showing also the supposed ages in the Summer of 1777 on enlistment under Lieut. Henry Simmons.

name	age on 1 Jan., 1782.	Assumed age in the Summer of 1777.
John Simmons	30	25
George Rouse	30	25
Baltus Simmons	24	19
Abraham Scott	28	23
Andrew Miller	24	19
Henry Finkle	24	19
Jacob Ness	22	17
Nicholas Hoffman	30	25
Frederick Baker	25	20
Philip Bonisteel	24	19
Peter Asselstine	35	30
David Hoffman	28	23
Henry Anderson	23	18
Jacob Bonisteel	23	18
Pieter Stover (Stiever)	35	30
John Mickel	27	22
Pieter Hegedorn	28	23
Jobst Hoffman	28	23
John Lieb	24	18

These two names were found in a similar list created 1 January, 1783.

name	age in 1783,	Assumed age in 1777.
John Pork	24	18
John Asselstine	28	22

The officer, Lieut. Henry Simmons is recorded in a List of Pensioned Officers on June, 1806, as being 66 years of age. This would indicate that he was 40 years in the Summer of 1777, when he led his party on the journey to Burgoyne's Camp at the Battenkill River.

If you haven't enjoyed this dramatic account of a troublous journey, laggely on foot or by batteaux, from Claverack to General Burgoyne at the Battenkill, then later to St . John, Quebec, and later ending in Quebec City, there is something wrong with your head, or possibly with mine. When one remembers that very few could read or write, we are lucky to have such a clear picture of the situation, even though you have to ponder over the variations in spelling.

And if it is possible that your Loyalist ancestor participated in the journey it should add greatly to your knowledge, enjoyment and interest. If so, you should be proud, indeed!