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March 1, 1982

NEWSLETTER NO. 50

Members and Friends of AEHS

OUR SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING

Our date is Sunday, March 28th; our place this year is "The Taste Of Maine", located one mile North of the Bath Bridge on Route 1. Approaching from the NORTH and Wiscasset, Route 1 brings you directly to the restaurant (about 5 miles), on the left. From the SOUTH, it is located just one mile north of the bridge on the right, also Route 1.

OUR SCHEDULE IS :

10 - 11 A.M.	Arrive for coffee, registration and conversation
11:- 12 A.M.	Short Business Meeting
12:30 - 1:30	Luncheon
1:30 - 3:30	Afternoon Program

AND OUR PROGRAM IS

" FROM QUEBEC TO YORKTOWN "

We bring a review and an update (and possibly a reunion) of our 1975 Expedition to Quebec AND a TRIP TO YORKTOWN by the people who were there. In full dress, with never before shown slides and speaking on these events are some of the people whom we may have missed (General Montgomery who led his March from New York) as well as those who trekked from Maine, New Hampshire and Mass. Our Speakers will be :

Joan Dwyer (for the ladies) from Mont Vernon, New Hamp.
John Skillin Aide-de Camp from Dixfield, Maine
Tom Nolan (General Montgomery) from Arden, New York
Crosby Milliman (Major Meigs) from Pittston, Maine

I plan to attend the March 28th AEHS Meeting and make the following reservations at \$ 7.50 each, which includes tax and gratuity. My choices for the meal are :

Baked Haddock	() No. of people
Veal Parmesan	() No. of people
Salisbury Steak	() No. of people

Included with all of the above are : V-8 Juice, French fries or Rice pilaf
Cole slaw, Ice Cream or Sherbet & sweet
& Beverages.

There has been some curiosity expressed about what happened to some of the men after the Expedition to Canada, their subsequent service in the war and their careers after the Revolution. This is the first of a series about some of the men. Since my husband was attached to Meig's Division as a photographer and we travelled with that Division during the Reenactment, it seems logical to start with Return Jonathon Meigs.

THE WHITE PATH

After the imprisonment in Quebec on January 2, 1776, Capt. Henry Dearborn who was a physician in private life, urged the inoculation of smallpox because his men would be exposed to it. Major Return Jonathon Meigs evidently did not take the inoculation but was removed to a convent hospital because of a severely painful lump in the armpit.

During the attack on Quebec, Major Meigs had saved the life of Capt. Law, an engineer officer of the defending forces, by making him a prisoner. This officer entertained Major Meigs at dinner in his quarters after the imprisonment and a Major McKenzie brought General Montgomery's knee-buckles and Mr. McPherson's gold broach and presented them to Major Meigs. 1.

When the opportunity came six months later, Capt. Law obtained permission of General Carlton to allow Major Meigs to give his parole and sail to Halifax on a British sloop.

At the same time Peter Levis, a former member of the Governor's Council in Portsmouth, N.H. called on Capt. Dearborn to offer him an opportunity to go with Major Meigs. Peter Levis, always an opportunist, had landed on his feet after he found it expedient to leave Portsmouth. He was now a member of the Governor's Council, a judge of the Admiralty and Judge of the Superior Court of Montreal. He told Capt. Dearborn that if he could secure permission for the Capt. to give his parole and sail with Major Meigs, would Dearborn help him get his wife and children out of Portsmouth and send them to Canada ? Capt. Dearborn agreed.

At one o'clock of the day the ship was to sail Judge Levis came to get him and Major Meigs and said it was all arranged. The two officers were brought before the Lieutenant Governor to give their parole and to arrange for exchange of prisoners when it became possible. The Governor himself wished them a good voyage.

They were entertained overnight on the Admiral's ship and on the morning of the 17th of June began their voyage home. It took them a month to reach Portsmouth. They had sailed, walked, ridden on horseback and in a wagon. They stood in the dusty street in Portsmouth ready to mount their horses for the last leg of their journey. The Expedition to Canada was over but the shared experience would hold them in friendship for the rest of their lives. With a quick salute they mounted their horses and rode off on their separate roads.

For Major Meigs it was a good time that fall and early winter. He put his affairs in order, reported to his regiment, visited as many of the families of his men under his command on the expedition as he could.

Before the outbreak of the war Major Meigs had lost his first wife, Joanna Winborn, in 1773. In 1774 he married Grace Starr and the marriage proved to be a happy one. From the notes in his diary it is evident that he sought every opportunity to send a letter to her.

1. Mr. McPherson was aide-de-camp. Both were killed.

By January, 1777, his exchange had come through and he was back with his unit. In May he was given the opportunity to lead an attack against a Loyalist foraging party under Delancy at Sag Harbor at the eastern end of Long Island. Col. Meigs embarked 170 men in whale boats at Guilford in the evening of May 23, crossed to Long Island Sound, which was full of British Cruisers, and landed at Sag Harbor at two o'clock in the morning. He took the foraging party by surprise, and made them prisoners and burned their boats. He took them back to Connecticut along with a large amount of provisions. Congress was so pleased by his leadership that it awarded him an "elegant sword" in recognition.

He served under General Anthony Wayne in the storming of Stony Point - particularly inspiring by the fact that it was done with only bayonets. Americans had a deep horror of bayonet attacks which some officers in the British forces delighted in exploiting. Stony Point proved to the American troops that they could handle a bayonet too.

When Benedict Arnold's attempt to sell West Point to the British was exposed, Col. Meigs' regiment was one of those transferred to West Point to protect it.

In 1781 after Yorktown the Continental Army was reduced and units combined, Col. Meigs was retired and he returned to Connecticut to resume his civilian life.

Col. Meigs came home to Connecticut with a deep interest in western land. During the long winters in army camps one of the subjects that had interested many officers was the opening up of lands beyond the mountains; the British had closed off all settlement there after the Treaty of Paris in 1763 at the close of the French and Indian War. George Washington was interested in the Ohio country from the time he had surveyed land for the old Ohio Co. and acquired holdings there as part of his pay.

When Congress voted to make up back pay for the Continental Army in land scrip, many men saw a golden opportunity to develop their own fortunes by buying scrip from Veterans who did not intend to use it. In 1787, with the passage of the Northwest Ordinance and the opening up of the Ohio country for settlement, Col. Meigs was ready. Sold by the new Ohio Co., land would be available in 640 acre lots at \$1.00 an acre. Further- this could be purchased in land scrip.

Sometime during the 1781-1787 period he had acquired the skills of a surveyor and part of the pay of surveyors would be in land. He applied for and received an appointment as one of the surveyors of the Northwest Territory. He was to survey lands along the Ohio in the area of the Muskingum River.

Return Jr. had graduated from Yale University in 1785 and married Sophia Wright the following year. Col Meigs with his wife, son and daughter-in-law together with a group of Connecticut settlers made the long and difficult journey overland to Pittsburg and then down the Ohio by flatboat to the junction of the Muskingum and Ohio Rivers.

The Meigs party was one of the first to emigrate under the new law. Col. Meigs very early worked out a code of rules and the settlers agreed they could live with them so he nailed them to a tree where any newcomers could read them for themselves.

The next year General Arthur St. Clair arrived as the newly elected governor of the Northwest Territory and set up his headquarters at the Meigs settlement which was renamed Marietta on April 7, 1788.

The Meigs party had established their settlement not far from where they landed. Danger from the Indians was always imminent but with unceasing alertness they managed to survive against the odds although it was not easy. Once his son barely escaped when Indians attacked.

Changes came quite rapidly for Col. Meigs. He surveyed successfully and managed not to have troubles with the Indians. He and his son were strong advocates for early statehood for Ohio. The outdoor life of a surveyor was a rugged one for the 61 year old man.

/2. The War of the Revolution by Christopher Ward.

In Washington Thomas Jefferson was elected President in the new century. He appointed General Henry Dearborn as his Secretary of War. There were many governmental posts to be filled. When Secretary Dearborn proposed the name of Col. Return Jonathon Meigs as Indian Agent to the powerful Cherokee Nation, President Jefferson liked what he heard and the appointment was proffered to Col. Meigs in 1801.

It must have taken long discussions with his family before he wrote his acceptance. He left behind his holdings in the Territory, his son Return, daughter-in-law and the newest Return Jonathon Meigs, just born that year. It was late summer when Col. and Grace Meigs packed their belongings and made the long trek to Washington and then to Tennessee.

In 1803 Ohio became a state and Mr. Return J. Meigs became the Chief Justice of the new state. His political career was one of importance in the development of the state and he served as Governor.

Col. Meigs had two great gifts in dealing with the Cherokees which evidenced in the diary of his experiences in the Arnold Expedition. He was a good listener and a sparse talker. Indians loved oratory and often white men made the mistake of not listening. He became very popular with the Indians and he helped them with very practical advice in their great experiment of adopting the life of the white man. It was during his time with the Cherokees that sequoia developed his Cherokee alphabet although Col. Meigs had nothing to do with it.

He escorted to Washington the Cherokee Chiefs and helped them with the treaties of 1804 and 1805 which attempted to work out some sort of peace between the avaricious settlers and the Indians. During this time he was appointed Commissioner and because of his patience and fairness he was named "The White Path" by the Cherokees.

In 1807 Grace Meigs died ending a 33 year marriage. He was left alone to face great loneliness of his last years. The next year he set up a convention between the Cherokees and the State of Tennessee which for the time being was very successful.

He had enduring friendships with many of the Indian Chiefs. In January of 1823 one of his elderly Indian friends came for a visit although the Chief was not in the best of health. Commissioner Meigs insisted that the Chief take his bed in the agency and he himself moved out to a tent. He caught cold which developed into pneumonia and he died January 23, 1823. With great sorrow the Cherokees buried "The White Path" on the agency grounds. He was 82 years old.

The fortunes of the Cherokees went steadily down hill after his death and it was only ten years later that they were forced to travel the Trail of Tears.

This entire research has been done, and is being contributed to us through the courtesy of Dorothea Thompson, Free Lance writer from Conway, New Hampshire.

Both Mr. & Mrs. Thompson are long time members of AEHS and will be remembered as bringing us the Contra Dancers at one of our meetings.

PART III

" BETRAYAL AT WEST POINT: THE BENEDICT ARNOLD CONSPIRACY, 1780 "

With the kind permission of Richard J. Koke, Curator, N.Y. Historical Society

Treason : The final Episode : Arnold Thirsts For Revenge

Interestingly, the beginnings of Arnold's correspondence with the enemy in May, 1779 coincided with the date of his marriage to Peggy Shippen in April. She was a pretty, vivacious Philadelphia society girl. Just what part she may have played in the treason has always been a debateable point. She probably knew something of what was going on. A sketch of Peggy Shippen, now at Yale University, was drawn in Philadelphia before her marriage to Benedict Arnold. It was done by a young British officer who was later to hang because of her husband's plotting. That British officer was, of course, John Andre who also enjoyed the social life of the Quaker Metropolis while it was occupied by the enemy in 1777-1778.

Major John Andre was Adjutant-General of the British Army in North America. He was a handsome, charming man of 30, a poet, painter, and musician who was to leave behind him an unstained name even among his enemies. It was he who carried on the correspondence with Arnold from British headquarters under the name of " John Anderson".

In August 1780 when Arnold appeared on the scene West Point was ^{not} a school (not until 1802) but a military fortress garrisoned by about 3,000 men, with which the Americans held control of the Hudson. The defenses were only two years old but they were strong and, with an iron chain drawn across the river, blocked the ascent of the British to the Hudson. Today the ruins of many of these forts and batteries are still to be seen as well as some links of the great iron chain.

Once at Westpoint Arnold established his headquarters in the Beverly Robinson house on the east side of the river opposite West Point at what is now Garrison. This was to be the nerve center of activity for better than one month Arnold was at the Point. It was destroyed by fire in 1892.

But while Arnold took over the routine business of a garrison command, his immediate problem was to arrange for a personal interview with Andre to go over the final details of the plot. He made several unsuccessful attempts to meet Andre in early September, 1780, but finally was able to see his way clear when he had hoodwinked into his confidence a lawyer by the name of Joshua Hett Smith who lived at Haverstraw on the Hudson, in what is now Rockland County, some 20 miles below West Point.

Arnold led Smith to believe that he was in correspondence with an American secret service agent in New York by the name of " John Anderson " whom he wanted to meet in order to secure some important information about British movements. Arnold explained that Anderson would be coming up the river in a British vessel, and would appreciate it if Smith would bring him ashore for the interview. Smith readily agreed. He never seems to have suspected anything of the real nature of the plot, and had no inkling as to Andre's true identity.

The plan agreed upon was for Andre to sail up the river to the vicinity of Halverstraw Bay where contact would be made and he would be taken ashore for a secret meeting with Arnold. Sir Henry Clinton, the British Commander-in-Chief, knew the risks involved and, before Andre left New York, Clinton specifically warned Andre:

1. Do not go within the American lines
2. Do not carry any incriminating papers
3. Do not assume any sort of disguise

As it happened, Andre was to disregard all three and, because of this, he was to die.

On September 20 Andre sailed up the Hudson on a British dispatch boat and boarded the British sloop VULTURE which was anchored off Croton Point at the lower end of Halverstraw Bay. Here he waited for the boat to take him ashore to meet the American General.

At midnight on September 21, Joshua Smith came to the VULTURE in a row boat manned by two of his tenant farmers who had been persuaded to act as oarsmen but who, nonetheless, were performing the task most unwillingly - and only because Arnold himself had threatened to imprison them if they refused to perform this service for the good of the country. Smith was to bring Andre (whom he knew as Anderson) to a rendezvous on the river shore near Halverstraw where Arnold was waiting. In the dark morning of September 22 Andre got into the boat and was rowed ashore. He wore his British uniform covered with a heavy blue overcoat.

They touched shore at the Long Cove where Arnold was waiting in a grove of trees on the bank above. Here the two men went over the details of the plan. The British were to ascend the river in force. Arnold was to distribute the garrison in such a manner that it could be captured piecemeal. A pretense of defense would be made and, at the proper moment, taking advantage of apparent defeat, Arnold would surrender West Point and all the troops under his command. The British would then be in a position to control the river.

Daylight broke on the morning of September 22, 1780 before the two conspirators completed their plans. The understanding had been that Andre would be taken back to the sloop; but the boatmen were uneasy and did not want to return, excusing themselves on the grounds that they were tired. Finally Arnold persuaded Andre to accompany him to Smith's house, some two miles away, to finish the conference. The idea was that Andre would be returned to HMS VULTURE on the following night.

But from this point a whole series of misadventures took place which ultimately brought about the complete collapse of the entire plot. Having been warned by Clinton not to go within American lines, Andre was disturbed to learn that he was now within the lines and could do nothing. Clinton had also warned Andre not to accept incriminating papers. But Andre had accepted six papers from Arnold which contained descriptions of the West Point Fortifications and information as to the state of the garrison. Andre was to hide these papers in his boots, and thus was concluded the treachery by which Arnold blackened his name forever.

In the early morning of September 22, 1780 while Arnold and Andre were in the Smith house a most unusual and completely unforeseen incident happened. On the opposite shore of the Hudson River a young American officer, Colonel James Livingston, had sent a cannon to Croton Point across from Halverstraw. The Americans opened fire on the HMS VULTURE and forced her to drop downstream. Arnold and Andre could do nothing but watch helplessly from a window. Andre was stranded within the American lines.

The events of history can sometimes hang on a thread. Little could anyone suspect what momentous effect Colonel Livingston's attack would have on the course of the war. Andre's failure to return to the HMS VULTURE forced his journey by land. This led to his capture and the failure of Arnold's attempted betrayal of West Point. This in turn prolonged a conflict that could perhaps have been disastrously shortened for the Americans by the English seizure of the Highland posts.

The firing on the HMS VULTURE forced a complete change of plans. Smith wanted no part of a return journey that night in search of the sloop; and it was thought best that the safest way for Andre to return to his own lines would be by land through Westchester. Smith was willing to guide Andre part way through that part of the country.

Arnold wrote passes to cover Andre and Smith on their journey; " Permit Mr. John Anderson to pass the guards to the White plains or below, if he chooses. He being on public business by my direction " B. Arnold.

Then Arnold informed Smith that " Anderson " was an American emissary who had borrowed a British uniform through pride or vanity, and it would be absolutely necessary for Smith to lend " Anderson " a civilian coat so as not to excite unnecessary questions should they be stopped. With this Andre disobeyed Clinton's last instruction Smith consented to do so and, having thus apparently provided for all contingencies, Arnold left Andre about 10: in the morning and returned to the Robinson House.

Late in the day Smith and Andre crossed the Hudson River at Stony Point, swung north through Peekskill, and then east across northern Westchester. They were stopped once by an American militia patrol near Crompond but Arnold's passes got them through. The Captain who stopped them warned them of the unsettled conditions south of the Croton River between the American and British lines - a no man's land - and that it would be best that they stop for the night at a nearby farmhouse for their own safety.

At daybreak on September 23, 1780 Andre and Smith continued on until they reached the house where Isaac and Sarah Underhill lived on the Pines ~~Br~~idge Road about a mile north of the Croton River. By this time Smith was growing increasingly squeamish about continuing further, and he told Andre he was going to leave him because of the dangerous condition of the country to the south. He gave Andre final instructions as to the road to New York and turned about and returned to the Hudson Highlands.

At this time Westchester County between the Croton River and Harlem River was a " no man's land " known as the Neutral Ground which was infested by robbers who committed their depredations under pretense of partisan warfare. There were two sets of these people, the " Cowboys " or cattle thieves from the British lines and the " Skinners ", supposedly Americans, who took anything they could find. And so, disguised in Smith's civilian clothes, Andre galloped south across the Croton and along the road to New York confident that he had slipped through American lines.

Suddenly about 9 O'clock, when Andre reached the Albany Post Road at Tarrytown, three young men all in their twenties sprang from the bushes with levelled muskets and ordered Andre to halt. One of the young men wore the green uniform coat of a Hessian Yaeger in the employ of the British.

What Andre should have done was to have played it by ear. He did not know who they were. They did not know who he was. What he should have done was to show them Arnold's pass. If they were Americans they certainly would have let him pass. If they were British sympathizers or Cowboys, he would have been among friends. Either way Andre had nothing to lose.

What Andre did not know was that these men were Americans- Westchester farmers in the militia service who had posted themselves beside the Tarrytown Road to intercept suspicious persons. They were John Paulding, age 21, Isaac Van Wart, probably 21, and David Williams age 25. Paulding was the one who wore the Yaeger coat. He had recently been a British prisoner in New York and had escaped, garbed in this manner. The sight of the Yaeger coat was probably the thing which threw Andre off guard. Andre made his mistake. Instead of pursuing a prudent course and showing the pass, he opened the conversation.

" My lad I hope you belong to our party ".

" What party is that ? "

" The lower party ".

" So do we "

With that Andre's sense of caution left him and he blurted out :

" I am a British officer on important business, and do not wish to be delayed one moment ".

With that Andre pulled out his watch and showed it to them to indicate that he was a gentleman, an officer; for ordinary people did not carry watches, and his word should be accepted .

WHAT HAPPENED TO ANDRE ? WE WILL BE TELLING YOU IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER.