

OLD SCHOHARIE.

A D D R E S S

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Although Schoharie became a county after the Revolution and the name it bears was not known 200 years ago, its history is so replete with interesting facts, that it would probably take a whole day only to indicate them and to mention the names of the actors in the drama without going into details. This paper can, therefore, give nothing but a general outline of the first settlements in the county, of its political organization and its religious establishments, and the data has been taken mainly from manuscript sources, which appear not to have been consulted by any historian of the county.

The county of Schoharie is one of the few counties in the State of New York, to which upon its organization in 1795 the Legislature gave the name of its first human inhabitants, the Schoharie Indians of the Mohawk tribe, the easternmost of the Five Indian Nations or the Confederacy of the Iroquois. The name, Schoharie; which is now borne by the county, by a township, by a village and by a river, is differently explained. Jephtha Simms, one of the earlier historians of the county, tells us, that it meant drift or flood-wood, because at a certain distance above the bridge at Middleburgh the two rivulets, meeting there to empty into the Schoharie river produced in the latter a counter-current, which caused a lodgment of drift-wood at every high water. Another tradition says Schoharie signifies to take across or carry over, still another gives the literal meaning as the meeting of two waters in a third. Another meaning of Schoharie, spelled Yo-sko-ha-ro is "Great Jampile," referring to the Jampile or natural bridge formed across the river above Middleburgh by the driftwood lodged by the action of the two small streams and the river at their confluence, and in the dim distance of tradition a chief by the name of Yo-sko-ha-ro lived and ruled at the base of the Onistagrawa. His name

was taken from the Great Jampile, near which he lived. He belonged to the Bear family, and a dictionary of the Iroquois' language designates Schoharie as a bear village.

The seal of the Schoharie County Historical Society very happily illustrates the origin of the name and the distinctive character of the tribe of Indians which inhabited the valley.

The castle of the Bear family of the Mohawks was near Canajoharie. The Turtle family sitting north and east with their castle at Icanderoga, now Fort Hunter, and the Wolf family westward near Tribe's Hill.

The name Schoharie is found spelled in seventeen different ways.

The Schoharie Indians seems to have been fractional parts or refugees from different nations or a decayed family of the Mohawks, who had been given shelter and hunting grounds by the Bear family. A petition of some Schoharie Indians, of which I shall tell you further on, is signed by them with the totem of the Deer family, a branch of the Mohawks, which has dwindled into insignificance before historical times.

The first settlers of this State, the Dutch, coming to America under the auspices of the West India Company had begun to push their way up the Mohawk river as far as Schenectady and somewhat west of it. Their English successors were equally anxious to become proprietors of lands still held by Indians. The first one, of whom it is known that he has looked upon Schoharee lands with a covetous eye, was Andrew Brown, who petitioned in Governor Dongan's time, from 1682 to 1688, for license to purchase from the Indians 500 acres in a tract, called Schoharie, a name, then for the first time heard. No record tells of his purchase and subsequent patent. The next to express a desire for the Schoharie lands was Colonel Nicholas Bayard, one of the great men of his day. He obtained in May 1694, a license to purchase 4,000 acres of land in the valley of the Schoharie creek from its mouth in the Indian fields, called Teaondaroga, near Fort Hunter, twenty-four to thirty miles upward to the "head or first spring" of said creek

near Kanjeearagore hill in the town of Middleburgh. The width is not given, but probably the Indians selling the land, said to the purchaser: "You may occupy and use as much of the land to the east and west, as your occasions may demand," for in numerous Indian deeds of land along streams this expression may be found. When Colonel Bayard had looked at his purchase, he made the discovery, that the soil was very stony and little adapted for agricultural purposes. Therefore, in order to have some benefits from it, he petitioned to have the land erected into the Manor of Kingsfield with feudal rights of jurisdiction, which was granted. But he was not allowed to enjoy whatever benefit he expected to derive from his manorial possessions very long. For in 1698, two years and a half after his purchase, two Mohawk Indians of the Deer family, Henry and Joseph, both converted to Christianity, came to New York and complained to Lord Bellomont, the Governor, that, while they were fighting against the French during the summer and fall of 1695, six idle, drunken men of their nation had sold a large tract of land, belonging to them, the complainants, called Ikohere (Skohere), "so large that a young man has enough to do to run over it in a day," for thirty beaver skins in rum and goods. The purchaser, they said, had been Arent Schuyler, acting on behalf of Colonel Nicholas Bayard. When on their return from their warpath they had learned of this transaction, they had made a complaint to the Commissioners of Indian Affairs at Albany, but instead of obtaining redress, Governor Fletcher had given a patent for the land to Colonel Bayard and they had then appealed to Governor Fletcher during his visit to Albany, but nothing was done. After due investigation of the case, Lord Bellomont had a bill introduced in and passed by the General Assembly to vacate the grant to Bayard, and the Indian owners were reinstated in their possessions. But Colonel Bayard did not intend to loose both his purchase and the purchase money, even though the amount was not more than ninety-six dollars for the 4,000 acres. He waited until a new Governor and a new Secretary had come to New York, who could be supposed not to know anything of the transaction of 1695, and then, in 1710, he asked,

that either the former patent should be reaffirmed or steps be taken to recover his expenses. But he had reckoned without his host, for Governor Hunter, one of the most conscientious men ever sent out by England to govern this colony, took no action on this nor on two subsequent petitions, presented by Samuel Bayard, the Colonel's son, after his father's death, repeating the request.

This first attempt to settle the lands along the Schoharie river under grants from the Governor was not soon followed, although individual settlers may have come into the country and, with permission of the Indian proprietors, squatted on the land. As late as the year 1710 Governor Hunter has occasion to write to the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations: "The Five Nations have until now insisted upon their rights to the lands of Scokery, near the Mohawk country. I found at Albany instructions to the Commissioners of Indian Affairs to restore them to their title. I owned their right, and they had a new consultation, where they resolved to make a present of those lands to her Majesty Queen Ann, which I accepted in her name and ordered them a suitable present; they have not yet called for the same, but indeed it is almost the only land in this province left to her Majesty to grant, though the whole be neither peopled nor cleared."

The great war, which devastated Germany and disturbed the rest of the European continent under the cloak of religious zeal for thirty years and which came to an end by the Westphalian Treaty of 1648, was supposed to have settled the question of freedom in believing in this or that doctrine. But France, posing as the champion of the Church of Rome, evaded, in 1688, the Palatinate on the banks of the Rhine and compelled all dissenting inhabitants to leave their homes. The first Palatines, thus driven out for the sake of their religious belief, found new homes on lower Delaware and Susquehanna rivers, but the full tide of this immigration did not fairly begin until about 1709. In this year 4,000 Palatines embarked for New York, but 1,700 died on the passage. They were invited to settle on Livingston Manor, in the present Columbia county, and many of them did so. Others settled in Ulster county and at Newburgh, Orange

county, and still others became in a manner, of which I shall tell you, the earliest settlers of this county and the ancestors of many of its inhabitants. William Smith, a royal judge of Colonial New York, and the author of a history of the Colony, says of the Palatines: "Queen Anne's liberality to these people was not more beneficial to them than serviceable to this colony. They have behaved themselves peaceably and lived with great industry. Many are rich; all are Protestants and well affected to the government. We have not the least ground for jealousy with respect to them." Judge Smith was not quite well informed about the manner in which the Palatines came to this county for that was not done very peaceably. Governor Hunter, with whom part of these people had come over from England, meditated settling them in the present Schoharie county and issued orders to the Surveyor-General of the Province, Augustin Graham, to lay out land in farm lots, which he did in 1710 at an expence of £138, but before the lands could be allotted a number of Palatines settled along the Hudson river and engaged in making pitch and tar, resolved to stop work and not to remain on the land, on which they had been settled for that purpose, but to remove to Schohary. Secretary Clarke says, that great pains had been taken to magnify to them the goodness of Schohary lands. How they carried out their resolution is told by Governor Hunter in a letter to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, October 31, 1712: "As to the Palatines, my substance and credit being exhausted, I had no remedy left but to intimate to that people, that they should take measures to subsist themselves during this winter upon the lands, where they are planted or work for others; upon this intimation some hundreds of them took a resolution of possessing the Schoharie lands and are accordingly marched thither. They cut a road from Schenectady." The punishment for this rash act followed upon the foot. In July, 1713, Governor Hunter writes: "The Palatines, who remain upon the lands, where I planted them, have, by the blessing of God and their own labours, been able to subsist themselves; those who run to Schoharie have been obliged to the charity of the Province to save them from starving."

I shall not weary you by telling, how the lands were divided, beyond mentioning that the patent to Adam Vrooman, for which he had to pay thirteen pounds, or thirty-two dollars and fifty cents, in fees, is the first on record. It is dated August 26, 1714, and covers 600 acres on a small run of water, coming from a white pine swamp and running into the Schoharie creek, south of Onitstagrawac Hills. A few months later the lands north of Adam, to the extent of 10,000 acres, were patented to Robert Livingston, Jr., Peter van Burgh, Henry Wileman, John and Meyndert Schuyler. These 10,000 acres are described as being in Hunter's Field, on the southeast side of Schoharie, and including Onitstagrawac creek. The site of the present town of Schoharie became the property of Lewis Morris, Jr., and Andreas Coeymans, by a patent dated May 24, 1726, for two tracts in Hunter's Field, on the west side of Schoharie creek opposite to the Fountain Flat, and covering 3,500 acres.

The Palatines had not taken the necessary steps to secure patents for the land, on which they had planted themselves in seven settlements, under their leaders, Conrad Weiser, Hartman Windecaer, John Hendrik Kniskern, Elias Garlock, Johannes George Smidt and William Fox. The result was, that when the parties, holding patents from the Governor of the Province, came to take possession of the lands granted to them, serious conflicts arose. I'll let one of these patentees, the just-mentioned Adam Vrooman, whose land had been squatted upon by Conrad Weiser, covering the present site of Middleburgh, tell his experiences. He writes to Governor Hunter, in June, 1715: "As in duty bound, I make bold to give you an account of the actions of one John Cunradus Wiser, a Palintine living at Schoree; he is called a captain among them. I was at Schoree last week, to see my land measured and with a design to build a house upon the land patented to me and given me by the Indians long ago. Wiser threatened to pull down, if I built a house, and now they turn their cattle into my corn. Conrad's son is very impudent, and they daily confer with the Indians." The Governor issued an order for the arrest of the

Weisers, father and son, because treating with the Indians was forbidden by proclamation. Before, however, this order could be executed, Vrooman had to add to his complaint, saying: "The Palatines still threaten me in a rebellious manner. I have measured a great part of the land and sowed considerable grain thereon. I was making a stone house twenty-three feet square and had it so high, that I laid the beams for the chamber, I having at the same time an Indian house about 200 yards off, for myself, workmen and negro to sleep in, but on the fourth inst. (July), in the night they had a contrivance to tie bells about horses' necks and drive them to and fro, in which time they pulled my house, stones and all, to the ground. John Conrad Weiser has been the ringleader, his son has lived among the Indians to learn their language, and is now their interpreter, and they both make treaties for them." The order for the apprehension of the Weisers was repeated July 22, 1715, but the arrests were never made.

The elder Weiser, whom Governor Hunter, in a letter of July 1718, calls "the constant ringleader of all mischief among the Palatines," had been a magistrate in his native village of Great Anstach in the present Kingdom of Wurtemberg, and by his wife Anna Maria Uebele, was the father of fifteen children. The wife died in 1709, and soon after Weiser left the country for America, where he landed at New York in June, 1710, and quickly joining his compatriots became one of their prominent men. When in 1718 the Palatines of Schoharie resolved to petition the King of England for a redress of their grievances and security against fancied persecutions and to delegate three of their number to lay their memorial before the King, John Conrad Weiser was one of these three, William Scheef and one Walrath being his colleagues. They embarked secretly from Philadelphia, but on the voyage fell into the hands of pirates, who robbed them of all their possessions and then set them free. The delegates made their way to Boston to procure necessities. On arriving at London they found themselves penniless and were forced to contract debts, which caused their incarceration until relieved by remittances from their homes in Schoharie. Scheef quarrelled with Weiser about

the manner of settling the existing difficulties at home and returned to America in 1721. He died shortly after. Weiser himself came back in 1723.

The petition, presented by these Palatine agents to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, August 2, 1720, tells, that the Palatines cleared the road through the woods from Schenectady at the rate of fifteen miles in fifteen days to a small tract of land called Schorie. But that tract being too small for their increasing families, they purchased from the Indians an adjoining piece for about \$300. Having built small houses and huts on this land, about one year after the said purchase, some gentlemen from Albany declared, to the Palatines, that they, the Albany men, having purchased the country of Schoharie from the Governor of New York, they would not permit the Palatines to live there, unless they took out leases. The Palatines refused and thereupon the Sheriff of Albany county with his posse was sent out to seize one of their captains, namely Weiser. The petition does not tell, that this same officer was treated to a ride upon a rail by the infuriated matrons and girls of Weiser's settlement, but it goes on saying, that the Albany people tried to arouse the Indians against the Palatines, who, however, found means to appease the savages by giving them whatever they wanted from their own stores. In 1717 the Governor summoned the Palatines of Schoharie to appear before him by delegates, to whom he told, that their people either must make legal agreements with the patentees or remove. A commission of twelve men were to appraise the value of their works and improvements, for which they should receive money. "But this not being done the Palatines, to the number of about 3,000, have continued to manure and sow the land, for which manuring the Albany men have put in prison one man and one woman and will not release them, unless they give security for 300 crowns."

In the first year after their arrival, the Palatines had sent out 300 men to the expedition against Canada (called Queen Anne's War), and afterwards to the assistance of Albany, then threatened by the French and Indians, for which services they had

never received a penny, though they were on the establishment of New York.

“Now, in order that the Palatines may be preserved in said land of Schoharie, which they have purchased of the Indians, or that they may be settled on an adjoining tract, they have sent three men to England to lay their case before his Majesty.” Johann William Scheef supplemented, in November following, the foregoing petition, in which he differed from his colleague Weiser and gives the interesting statement: “There are at present 160 families, consisting of about 1,000 souls in Schoharie.”

On presenting their petition, the delegates from Schoharie were vastly astonished, to find the King and his ministers in possession of all the late transactions at Schoharie. The King, supposing the illegal deeds of the people there resulted from bad hearts instead of from ignorance, the real parent of all the difficulties, did not listen to what the delegates had to say for themselves and ordered their confinement in prison. While thus in durance vile, many of their people in Schoharie, convinced that they stood in their own light, and that it was too late to procure a legal title to their lands free of charge, began to purchase from the patentees, who granted them liberal terms. Others removed to Stone Arabia, the name of which is erroneously said to have been given to the locality through a mistake of an English traveler, who riding past a field where women were gathering off the stones, put some questions in English to them. The women, not understanding the language, supposed he asked what they were doing, and answered: Stone raffien (We gather stones). The name of Stone Arabia was, however, transferred by the Dutch of Albany, from an island near that city, which the earliest settlers had already called so about 1650. Most of the Schoharie Palatines, under the leadership of Conrad Weiser, made their way to the Susquehannah river, built their canoes and flat-boats and then floated down the river to Swatara and Tulpehocken, in Pennsylvania, where they made their permanent homes. Weiser became a distinguished and useful citizen of the Quaker Commonwealth, and died at Swatara, July 13, 1760.

I have already told you, that in November 1714. 10,000 acres of Schoharie land were granted to Robert Livingston, junior, and four partners. One of the original grantees, Henry Wileman, had made over his share of 2,000 acres to Rip van Dam, George Clarke and Philipp Schuyler, who in 1722 proposed to the other four original grantees to have the patent divided into fourteen equal shares, James Livingston to be the surveyor and Schoharie men the chainbearers. A letter, written a year later by Mr. Isaac Bobbin, deputy secretary of the province, to George Clarke, tells us, that though the surveying part and the distribution of the shares caused no unpleasant remarks, there were things connected with it, which did not meet the approval of all. Bobbin writes: "I enclose Mr. van Dam's memorandum of the account relating to the Schoharie patent. Those gentlemen have been very extravagant, in one article they charge twenty-five pounds (\$62.50), for the expense and fatigue of their journey from Albany, which article is struck out, as well as some others, which Mr. van Dam looked upon to be exorbitant."

Land was considered of little value among the pioneer settlers of New York and large tracts of it were acquired for speculation by men of influence with the Governor and council, who evaded the law by associating with themselves such persons, as would allow their names to be used in the petition for a grant. Before the French and Indian war, which ended with the overthrow of French dominion on this continent, 2,000 acres were the allowance for each name, after the war, when the disbanded soldiers were to be rewarded by bounties in land, this allowance was reduced to 1,000. I shall tell you only of one of the patents granted under the 2,000 acres rule. It was granted November 18, 1737, to William Corry and twelve associates and covered a tract of 25,400 acres, south of the Mohawk and west of the Schoharie river, the Indian name of which is stated as Tienonderoga. Part of this tract is now in Montgomery county. Its eastern boundary is given as beginning at a tree, marked and painted by the Indians, standing near the footpath from Fort Hunter to Schoharie. Another line is described as "from a wagon rut in

the road to a gooseberry bush," and I will defy the most skillful surveyor to find that wagon rut or the gooseberry bush now, about 160 years after this patent. William Corry, who, though twelve other names appear in the patent, was the sole owner of the land, released one undivided half of the tract to George Clarke, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province. Twenty years later the two partners thought of dividing their interests and Corry tells his woes experienced as the proprietor of such an extent of uncultivated lands, which he had tried to settle, in some letters to his friend, the Honourable Joseph Murray, a member of his Majesty's Council for the Province of New York: "I have greatly suffered by a settlement made on the patent in 1739 (according to the map of the patent, this settlement was in Montgomery county). I sent two persons over to Ireland to bring settlers. They brought me ten families, whose passage I paid. I bought for them iron tools, pots, kettles, etc., and borrowed for their use £800 (\$2,000), my wife advanced them £60 (\$150) in 1741, to buy cattle, as theirs had died in the hard winter of 1740. In all it cost me £1,736 (\$4,340). In the fall of 1744, when the war with Canada began to grow hot, the greatest part of our settlement broke up and in 1745 the whole was evacuated. About one year and a half ago, that is in 1754, I settled one family upon the very line next to Canajoharie, that being the place he chose. I let him have 200 acres for twenty years free and after that to pay thirty pounds (\$75) for 100 acres in fee to make a beginning of a settlement (according to the before-mentioned map, this seems to have been in Schoharie county). Since that four families more upon very easy terms settled near him. This war has driven them off again, except one or two; how long they may stay I can't tell. The first settlement was an unspeakable loss to me and to this day I am much involved by it. I brought it to that perfection that every man could help himself before the country in general broke up. After the settlement was broken up, the Indians or white people burned every house and barn to the ground, and it remains without an inhabitant to this day of 1756." In the division, which did not take place

without considerable haggling between the two partners, Corry selected the part of the patent on which he had established his second settlement; that is, Schoharie land. After the close of the French war in 1763, the rush for lands in Schoharie was great. Johannes Lawyer and thirty-six associates were given 36,600 acres, now in the townships of Middleburgh and Schoharie; John Wetherhead and thirty-nine others received 40,000 acres in Blenheim; John Morin Scott and seventy-seven others 42,500 acres in Broome and Middleburgh, the remaining 35,500 acres, to make up the allowance of 1,000 acres per name were located in Greene county. Stephen Skinner and thirty-nine others had 40,000 acres in Summit, Sharon and Cobleskill. Nearly one-half of the county, which is said to cover 375,000 acres, was granted away in such large tracts.

The eagerness with which the white intruder upon aboriginal property came into the Schoharie region, opened the eyes of the Indians concerning the value of their land. Mohawk Indians, living at Schoharie, had sold some pasture land to Johannes Lawyer in the spring of 1754, but the purchaser's surveyor had given in the return of his survey a larger number of acres than were sold, and the patent was granted accordingly. When the Indians discovered how they had been overreached, they complained to Governor Hardy at New York, and as then politics required, to keep on good terms with the Five Nations, who were valued allies against the French, the matter was so adjusted to the satisfaction of all, that thirteen years later, in 1767, the Schoharie Indians tell the following story to Sir William Johnson, the celebrated Indian Commissioner: "We are come, they say, to acquaint you with an extraordinary affair. It is concerning the land we sold, when the Governor was at your house last fall for the use of Hannes Lawyer and friends, from whom we then received the full consideration agreed upon, but now we understand that Lawyer and his friends are to have but one-half of it. To us, such doing appear strange, and we believe, you would think hard of us, were we to act so. We can not, therefore, in justice to these people, who have been long about that tract and at a good

deal of expense besides the purchase money, allow the land to be surveyed for people, with whom we are not acquainted, neither did we hear of the least intention they had in purchasing these lands, and if they had applied we could not think of letting them or any other set of people have the land, which we had so long ago promised to Lawyer and his friends, as you may remember." Sir William Johnson promised to lay the matter before the Governor, by whom it was settled.

The county of Albany, to which Schoharie then belonged, as well as the other nine original counties of the Province of New York, were divided into precincts, corresponding to some extent to our present townships. Schoharie was made a precinct in 1720, and reached from the western line of Rensselaer Manor as far west as there were white settlements. The ruling powers of such precincts were called commissioners, and to the commissioners of Schoharie precinct, Peter Vrooman, John Lawyer and William York, the Act of Assembly "for laying out and clearing public highways in the precinct of Schoharie," passed July 24, 1724, entrusted the work. They were directed to make already opened roads passable, but could not open new roads, nor alter any "that is commodious." Whenever they had occasion to call upon a farmer with his team, cart or plough, one day's work of such a farmer was to be esteemed equal to three days' work of a single man. The government of New York had by this time discovered that, to counteract French influence among the Far Western Indians, and to control the fur trade with them, military posts on the Great Lakes were absolutely necessary, and had established such settlements at Irondequat and Oswego. As it might become necessary to go to these posts in winter, when the Mohawk river and Otsego Lake are impassable for boats, the roads had to be kept open, and this was provided by a law, passed November 11, 1726, "for breaking up the road in the winter time from Schoharie to a place called the Verbergh." The justices of the peace of Skohere Precinct, Jan Joost Petri, Hans Jurie Cass and Adam Michell Smith, were authorized to order such a number of persons with sleighs and horses, as they thought sufficient, to break up the

road, when snow happened to fall in winter. Any person, properly summoned for this service by the constable, but neglected or refused to come, was liable to a fine of nine shillings (\$1.12) for every day. The Colonial Legislature was only once more to pass a law specially applicable to Schoharie. This was the act of June 10, 1760, "for altering the time of the annual meeting of the inhabitants of Schoharie." It said:

"Whereas, It is inconvenient for the inhabitants of Schoharie to hold their annual meeting on the first Tuesday in April, by reason of the roads being at that season of the year very deep and scarce passable, Be it enacted, that it shall be lawful to and for the said inhabitants, after the publication of this act, to hold their annual meetings on the first Tuesday in May.

The public officers of colonial times were not elected by the people, as to-day, but owed their appointment to the influence which they themselves or their friends had with the Governor and council in New York. The following letter, dated Schoharie, November 20, 1774, and written by Jacob Sternberger and John Lawyer to the Honorable James Duane, member of the council, tells how the thing was done; "Ever since Alexander Campbell has been in this place it has been filled with broils and quarrels. If an action is tried before another justice he takes the pains to persuade people that justice is not done to them, which continually breeds disturbances and law suits; as for being a man of truth and integrity, he is far from it. We desire, if any alteration can be made, that Mr. Campbell's commission be taken away and perhaps conferred on Mr. Peter Becker. One of our commissioners has moved out of the county. We think Peter Zelig, senior, is the most fitten to occupy his place." The Revolution prevented Governor Tryon from acting upon the foregoing suggestions.

The great Englishman, Pitt, Lord Chatham, had said: "The forefathers of the Americans did not leave their native country and subject themselves to every danger and distress to be reduced to a state of slavery; they did not give up their rights; they looked for protection and not for chains from their mother

country; by her they expected to be defended in the possession of their property and not to be deprived of it." Notwithstanding this eloquent appeal in behalf of the great Aryan principle, "No taxation without representation," and against unjust taxation, the Stamp Act and other laws obnoxious to the American Colonies, were passed by the British Parliament. Alexander McDougal had moved at a numerous meeting of the inhabitants of New York city: "That any attack or attempt to abridge the liberties or invade the constitution of any of our sister colonies, is immediately an attack upon the liberties and constitution of all the other British colonies." Royal troops had attacked the militia at Concord and Lexington, and the country was soon in arms, and in pursuance of the just-quoted resolution of McDougal, adopted in New York, the militia of this colony was called for. The colonists along the seaboard had to bear the first brunt of the great war now following. Schoharie and other interior districts remaining only spectators. Fully aware of the importance of the step taken by their more eastern and southern friends, the inhabitants of these inland districts organized committees of vigilance, whose duty it was to gather information relative to the great storm, prepare for the defence of the frontiers and to keep the Indians in the neighborhood neutral. By order of the Provincial Congress, the men of Schoharie, able to bear arms, were enrolled as militia men and formed into the Fifteenth Albany County Regiment of three companies, to complete which, men of the neighboring district of Duanesburgh, Schenectady county, were added, and later in the war, a fourth company was raised in Cobleskill, under Captain Christian Brown, and Lieutenant Jacob Borst. You may recognize many familiar names among the officers of this regiment, and I give you, therefore, the roster for the year 1778, the only one now in existence. According to this record Peter Vrooman was Colonel, Peter W. Ziele, Lieutenant-Colonel, Thomas Ecker- sen, Jr., and Jost Becker, Majors, Lawrence Schoolcraft, Adjutant, Peter Ball, Quartermaster, George Mann, Jacob Hager, and George Richtmeyer were the Captains of three companies, with

Christian Stubragh, John Dominick, Martinus van Slyck, Johannes W. Bouck, Johannes I. Lawyer and Martinus W. Ziele, as Lieutenants. The pay-rolls of the State show, that the Schoharie companies were in pay, that is engaged in active duty, from July 1778, to April, 1781, but do not say where, and what duty they performed. For this information we must look to the reminiscences of individuals. Peter Swart, who represented the county in the Assembly and Senate of the State, and in the House of Representatives at Washington, and was the first judge of the county, tells his experience, as follows: "I was enrolled in the militia at 16 years of age (this was the lawful age for enrolling at that period); served as a private for six months, was then promoted to Corporal and a year later Sergeant. In 1778 I became Ensign. I was one of the first to sign the compact and association. I turned out to Stone Arabia in 1776, to check the progress of the tories; in the fall of the same year we marched to Albany, thence to Fort Edward and to Johnstown for the same purpose. In the Spring of 1777 we were ordered to Harpersfield, thence to the Delaware, to take up disaffected people. After a rest of three days at home, I went down the Helleberghs to take tories; we captured about twenty-five of them and lodged them in the jail at Albany. In August, 1777, I was one of the thirty-two, who made a stand to oppose McDonald and his party. My neighbor, Ephriam Vrooman (who later became Lieutenant-Colonel of the regiment and as such was captured by the enemy) and I were sent to Albany for aid; on our way we came unexpectedly upon a party of royalists, but we managed to escape."

As the people of the country are now divided on questions of politics, so they were then, and a number of Schoharie people not only remained the friends of the British crown, but also took up arms to fight their liberty-loving neighbors. Judge Swart tells us who they were. "Did not McDonald and his party," he says, "come down as far as my house, encamp there till next day and destroy everything? I had left home. The same day they were defeated, fled into the woods and went off to Canada; about twenty-six from Brakabeen went with them. What would have been the

result if our small party had made no resistance and had tamely submitted? McDonald would have marched through Schoharie and in all probability have reached Albany. What was the consequence as far as he came down? Was not the farm of Adam Crysler confiscated? Also the farm of Adam Bouck and brothers, of Frederick Bouck, of Bastian Becker, of John Brown, of Hendrick Mattice, of Nicholas Mattice and a number more, who had joined McDonald and fired on our men?"

This McDonald, by birth a Scotchman, was a noted tory leader, who had settled on Charlotte river. At the breaking out of the war he had gathered about him several hundred royalists and Indians, with whom he intended making his way through the Schoharie settlements, to join the forces under Sir Henry Clinton and General Burgoyne. Colonel St. Leger, another British officer, was approaching the Mohawk valley, also bound in the direction of Albany. The troops which Schoharie could furnish were too weak to resist these enemies, and the men of this district were on the point of submission, as a letter of General Schuyler to the Albany Committee of Safety tells. He says: "The district of Schoharie has pointedly intimated that unless continental troops are sent there they will submit to the enemy." The situation in Schoharie was undoubtedly a bad one. No forts had been erected in the settlements, to give shelter to the defenseless women and children; for want of union in their councils, confusion reigned among the most courageous. The consequence was that a large part of the militia refused to march, when ordered out, until some provision was made for the protection of their own families against the common enemy.

Captain George Mann, of the Schoharie militia, declared himself a friend of King George, and collecting a number of other tories and Indians, he threatened destruction to all, who would not lay down their arms or accept protection from their enemies. This dispirited the patriotic inhabitants still more, and many left the country for safer quarters. An appeal for help was sent to Governor George Clinton, in which it was pointed out, that the frontiers of Ulster and Albany counties became thus exposed to a

hostile invasion and that if such proceedings as Mann's and his companions were not checked, the flame might possibly extend further. As a remedy it was suggested, to send a party under an active and intelligent officer by way of Woodstock or Catskill, who should fall upon the enemy, arouse the spirits of the men friendly to the American cause and give the Indians such an impression of the activity of the Americans, as would render them cautious in their adherence to England. Colonel Pawling of an Ulster county regiment was ordered by Governor Clinton to destroy Mann and his party by a sudden exertion. Before this order could be carried out, Colonel John Harper, who was specially charged with the duty of protecting Schoharie, had started for Albany on horseback to procure aid and there a small body of cavalry was detailed for duty in Schoharie. On arriving near the place of Judge Swart, two miles from a tavern at the forks of the road, later owned by Cornelius Vrooman, it was ascertained that the enemy was on the retreat up the valley. They were overtaken by a rapid movement and a few shots were exchanged, then the cavalry by an impetuous charge struck the Indians and the tories with such a panic, that they broke from their position on the lawn before the house, then belonging to Adam Crysler, and fled up the river. The unevenness of the ground, unfavorable for cavalry, and the darkness coming on prevented a pursuit. David Wirt, a lieutenant of the detachment of cavalry, was killed, the first man that fell in Schoharie in defence of the principles of free government. Rose, a private of the same command, died of his wounds three days after the engagement.

Captain Mann, seeing that his efforts to keep the Schoharie valley in the interest of the King, were proving futile, was allowed to surrender himself, when he was transferred to Albany for trial. Owing to the great influence and respectability of his whig relatives and neighbors Mann's trial did not take place until after the close of the war, when a liberal policy having been adopted towards those who had committed no very flagrant act, he was set at liberty and returned to his family and the quiet possession of his property.

This raid by Tories into the Schoharie region showed, how necessary it was to have forts. Three of them were now devised for the valley, of which the central one, known during the War of the Revolution, as the Middle Fort was the first one built. It was erected in the fall of 1777, about half a mile northeast of Middleburgh bridge. The Upper Fort, five miles southwest of the first, was commenced in the same autumn, but not completed until the following summer. The Lower Fort, situated six miles north of the Middle Fort was begun and completed about the same time as the upper. The stone church still standing one mile north of the court-house, which now contains the archives of the Schoharie County Historical Society was enclosed within the pickets or pallisades of this fort. Citizens and soldiers contributed to the erection of these strongholds, the citizens drawing together the timber required and the soldiers putting it in place.

The next year witnessed another engagement. This time it was the new Cobleskill Company under Captain Brown, supported by a small detail from Middleburgh, which had to do the fighting, while the enemy were Indians under Joseph Brant, numbering over 350. The losses on both sides were nearly equal; that is, about twenty-five of each party. This battle of Cobleskill, fought on the 2d of June, 1778, was commemorated by the patriotic citizens of the place on July 4, 1837, when they assembled on the knoll, where the house of George Warner, one of the soldiers on the American side, had stood and was burned. The Schoharie valley had to bear its share of the war and bore it nobly. To tell you of all the incidents would probably require the whole night. I shall, therefore, mention only the names of persons and places such as: The Captivity of William Hynds and family, of New Dorlach, in Canada; the invasion of Vrooman's land by Brant and his Indians; the burning of Middleburgh Church; the capture of Major Woolsey and his command by Colonel Vrooman; the siege of the Middle Fort; the attack on the Lower Fort; the battle of Sharon; the invasion of Foxes Creek; a new invasion of Cobleskill, and end what I

have to say of the connection of Schoharie with the great war, that we should never forget the irredeemable debt, which we owe to the men, who helped by their blood and their property to establish our glorious country, the United States of America.

When peace was restored in 1783, and law ruled again in place of the sword, the legislative body of the State of New York decided to organize by act of April 7, 1795, the county of Schoharie, dividing it into the six towns of Schoharie, Middleburgh, Blenheim, Bristol (now Broome), Cobleskill and Sharon, which have been subdivided, so that you have now sixteen townships in the county with a population of about 29,000. Since then no other guns have been heard in the Schoharie valley than those fired by sportsmen or in celebration of some public event. The only fight, which you witness yearly, is the fight of the ballot, occasionally made lively by a few fists. But the spirit which animated your ancestors in 1776, has evidently not died out, for during the late between the North and the South, Schoharie gave her sons to the third and the sixteenth regiments of cavalry, the former commanded by the gallant Hoosic Mix, who sealed his devotion to the Union with his life's blood; to the third, seventy-sixth, one hundred and second, one hundred and thirty-fourth and one hundred and thirty-sixth regiments of infantry and to the third and fourth regiments of artillery. Their battle flags bear the names of many hard-fought contests, Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia and the Carolinas resounded to their steps.

The people who first settled in the Schoharie valley and cultivated her fair acres, were, as I have already told you, German Palantines and Dutch New Yorkers, all very religious people, but differing in their manner of worship, the former being mostly followers of Martin Luther, the latter of Calvin. By the time they came into Schoharie, the Calvinists had been compelled to allow the Lutherans perfect freedom of worship, and it is most likely, that the first religious service in Schoharie, was held by a Lutheran minister, the Reverend Joshua Kocherthal, who, after an exploring voyage to America with the Governor, Lord Love-

lace, in 1707 to 1708, came again with Governor Hunter in 1710. Magister Kocherthal could only occasionally come to this Lutheran parish in the Schoharie valley, as he had also to attend to the spiritual wants of the Palatines at East and West Camp on the Hudson. This may have been the reason why so many of these German Lutherans joined the Dutch Reformed Church, that is, became followers of Calvin. Notwithstanding these secessions, the Lutheran congregation gained strength and wealth, so that in 1742 they felt able to call a resident pastor. It was extended to Reverend Peter Nicholas Sommer, a native of Hamburg, in Germany, who arrived on the field of his labors on the 25th of May, 1743, and preached his introductory sermon on the thirtieth of the same month. Soon after this date the vestry, consisting of Abraham Berg and Michael Frymaner, as elders, Henry Schaeffer and Peter Lowensteen, as deacons, decided to erect a parsonage, which was to serve at first also as a church. The building was completed in the first week of September, and on the twelfth of that month, public worship was held in it. This continued until 1750, when preparations were commenced for erecting a church, which could be consecrated and dedicated on Whitsuntide, May 6, 1751. In December, 1758, Rev. Mr. Sommer could preach his first sermon at Cobleskill. Ten years later he became blind, but he continued to serve his congregation until 1789, when old age obliged him to retire from the ministry. He then went to live with relatives at Sharon, where he died in 1795.

The first Dutch Reformed domine, who taught the gospel in this region, was Hendrick Hagar, who, like his Lutheran colleague, had to come from West Camp to perform his duties here in 1711. The Calvinists built their first house of worship of wood, several rods northeast of the old stone church. When this latter was erected in 1772, the wooden structure was pulled down, but they had no settled pastor here until 1736. Ehle, Erikzon and Weiss had come, so to say, as missionaries to preach, baptize and marry. Weiss was a native of the Palatinate, who had come to Philadelphia with about 400 emigrants in 1727, and who, after a visit to

Europe for the purpose of raising money for his church in Pennsylvania, settled in New York Colony, working in Dutchess county and in the Schoharie valley. The first settled domine was Johannes Schuyler, who came in 1736, being also one of the few ministers of his denomination, ordained for his work in America. Until 1755, candidates for the ministry had to go to Holland to be ordained by the Classis of Amsterdam. Schuyler was ordained at New York by special permission of the Amsterdam Classis. The Consistory of Schoharie wrote after his installation, the following letter to Amsterdam: "Reverend Gentlemen and respected brothers in Christ. Although your letter of October 1, 1736, did not reach us until March 2, 1738, its contents gladdened our hearts, as you have so kindly granted our request, for which we thank you most gratefully, for otherwise we could not have found means to provide our congregation with a regular preacher and teacher. We hope and pray, that the services of our minister may so be blessed by Heaven, that we may gladly give to you report of the good results thereof." This letter of which the original is in the possession of the General Synod of the Reformed Church, is signed by John Schuyler, minister at Schoharie, Jonas Larrowa and Johan Pieter Phies, elders. Rev. Mr. Schuyler left Schoharie in 1755 to go to Hackensack in New Jersey, but he returned to Schoharie in 1766 and died here in 1779.

A blank call for a minister to take charge of the Dutch church in Schoharie gives us an idea of how the congregation expected such a minister to fulfill his duties. He was to receive for every person baptized a fee of one shilling, or twelve and a half cents, for every couple married, a fee of eight shillings; his salary, not stated, was to be paid half in cash, half in wheat; his firewood was to be furnished free of charge at the parsonage and he was to have four Sundays in the year to himself.

The Methodist Episcopal, the Baptist and the Roman Catholic churches did not obtain a footing in the present State of New York until after the Revolution, and then they, with the Episcopal church, came into Schoharie.

Time will not allow me to speak of the industrial features of the county. Its history is full of interest. I have had pleasure to-night in adding this leaf to the historical wreaths which have been woven for old Schoharie. I am proud of its history and its people, and let me express, in closing, the hope that its future may, if possible, be more glorious than its past, and that it may shine through all time as one of the brightest links in the golden chain of counties which constitutes the greatest State in our Federal Union.

