

PS 3507

E 5/506

2007

5.15 C6

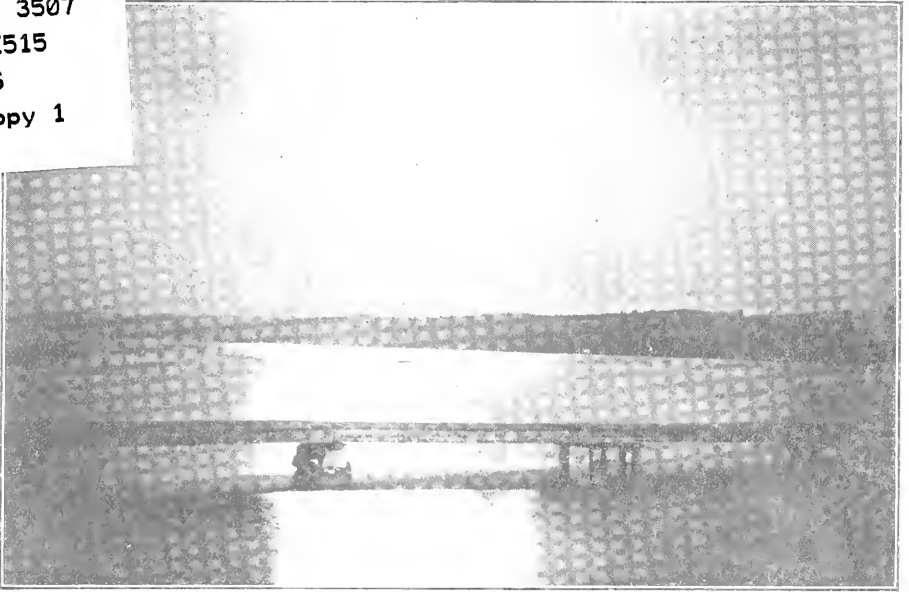
18

PS 3507

.E515

C6

Copy 1



Conesus
Lake
in History

By H. W. DeLong

Handwritten text, possibly a signature or initials, located in the center of the page.

21

CONESUS LAKE IN HISTORY

Read before the Livingston County, New York, Historical Society at
the Summer Meeting, Maple Beach, Conesus Lake,
August 27th, 1914, by H. W. DeLong.

One hundred and thirty-five years ago next month had we been standing, on a certain morning where we are gathered here today, we could have distinctly heard that volley of rifles that sealed the fate of Sullivan's scouting party on Groveland hill but a short half mile away, and had we looked above that fringe of trees at the head of the lake, many of them still standing—we might have seen the smoke of the army's camp fires curling upward. The theme is an interesting one, and from an historical viewpoint marks an epoch in the building of this great commonwealth, second to none other. I regret that a better hand than mine is not here today to paint the glorious picture.

Conesus, fairest of that peerless string
Of lakes that gem the western Empire State
Of thy past history let the poet sing
Thy tragedy of war and savage hate.

To see thee dimpling in these latter days
Serene and smiling twixt the peaceful hills
With well tilled farmlands bordering thy bays
And summer homes, and groves where wildbird trills

'Tis hard to think that once this happy shore
Harked back the rifles' echo and the dreaded yell
Of painted savage, while the cannons roar
Turned back each wild thing to it's quiet dell.

Yet so it was, the Seneca laid claim
To all the region roundabout this lake
Here was his hunting ground, his council flame
His home, his heritage, that no foe could take.

For many years the western Longhouse door
Had been his place to guard, his trust to keep
He held it 'gainst all comers o'er and o'er
No wily foe e'er found the tribe asleep.

And thus it was until the white man came
With white men's vices, lust for land and pelf
He bribed the savage, taught him war's fierce game
Stirred him to rapine. took the gains himself.

Under the spur of British greed and gold
The Seneca, remorseless as the grave
Swooped on the frontier, sparing young nor old
Choosing the helpless, those with none to save.

On Susquehanna's shore the war cry pealed,
And burning cabins flared the evening skies,
The helpless settler working in his field,
Falls like the clod that in his furrow lies.

Driven from their homes and forced the land to flee
These hapless people goaded to despair,
Appealed to Congress in humanity
For help their ruined region to repair.

The nation fighting for her very life,
Resourceless, weakened by a skillful foe,
Keeping up as best she could unequal strife,
Gave heed at last and planned a telling blow.

A force was raised at Washington's command
Five thousand strong, with Sullivan their head
With orders to invade the Seneca's home land
Ply fire and sword and devastation spread.

Up from Tioga marched this sturdy band
Of Pennsylvania and Yankee men
With veterans Clinton, Maxwell, Poor and Hand
To lead the way through forest glade and fen.

Ruthlessly each Indian town they sacked,
 Burning the wigwams, trampling down the grain.
Forcing the red men who were strongly backed
 By Tory aid, to fight and flee again.

Relentless on they pressed, this gallant band,
 Through swamp and defile never trod before
By white man's foot; then crossing higher land
 They came at length to Kan-an-dai-gua's shore.

An Indian village here was sacked and burned,
 Orchards in fruitage leveled with the plain,
Great fields of corn the troopers' horses spurned,
 A rest, a feast, and on they fared again.

Southwestward on they marched to Honeoye,
 Where stores and invalids were left in care
Of guards whose mission was to burn, destroy,
 And the rich acres of these flats lay bare.

Still further in the west the troops marched on,
 Deploying scouts who scanned each rock and tree
For savage foeman, for they knew anon,
 They'd near the Castle of the Genesee.

Rising a gentle ridge, a vista opened wide,
 A verdant valley, rich with grass and brake,
And lying just beyond in sparkling pride
 The calm, clear waters of Conesus lake.

A halt was called, and on a green plateau
 The camp was pitched with military care,
Sentries were posted pacing to and fro,
 And campfires scented the September air.

Calling his leaders to the council tent
 The Chief, resolved upon a telling blow,
Suggested that a group of scouts be sent
 To find the stronghold of the wary foe.

With Sullivan's idea they all concurred
 And free discussion soon matured a plan,
And each one tendering his final word
 It but remained to designate the man

Whose foresight, bravery and woodland skill
Would make him worthy for the task employed,
They scanned the roster, checking all until,
Their judgment centered on Lieutenant Boyd.

Boyd was a youngster of the yeoman type,
A Pennsylvania man, with a clean strain
Of steadfast bravery that made him ripe
For all the risks of Indian Campaign.

Gladly he listened to the task assigned—
To take a score of men and make his way,
Reporting to the army left behind
Just where the looked for Indian village lay.

Out in the dusk he led his little band,
A tried Oneida showing them the trail,
Cautiously each foot of way was scanned,
For cunning must match cunning to prevail

In border warfare, and at break of day
They reached a village on the Genesee
Empty and silent all the wigwams lay,
No sign of life save lodge fires burning free.

The scouts presuming this the looked for town,
Sent four men back to camp with a report
To Sullivan, then each man settled down
To breakfast, and a needed rest to court.

While resting thus, one private Murphy, saw
Two skulking red men hovering in the glade,
On impulse he his trusty piece did draw
And made a kill before his hand was stayed.

The victim's fellow darted quick away
With sinuous doublings like a startled deer
And disappearing through the forest gray
Boyd knew he now had deepest cause for fear.

Murphy securing his victim's scalp and gun
Laughed at his leader's sudden serious mien,
Upheld his blunder with, "It must be done"
Then notched his gun stock, saying "seventeen."

Sure they were in jeopardy
 Boyd ordered a retreat
Back to the army camped
 Eight miles away,
A wilderness between
 And a foe both strong and fleet
Straining to head them off
 lusting to slay.
On sped the little band
 threading the path
Swiftly and silently
 Coolly and steady,
Bound to elude
 the red foeman's wrath
Fingers on trigger guards
 every man ready,
Safely they traveled
 six miles of the distance,
Hope sprang afresh
 In the hearts of these boys.
They would soon meet the pickets
 There would be no resistance
"Hurrah! we're near camp
 with its safety and joys."
The trail was now trending
 down into the valley
On toward the stream
 that fed the bright lake,
They sauntered along
 with no thought of a rally
When a volley of rifles
 the forest did wake.
A dozen young fellows
 some dead and some wounded,
Went down at that fire
 on green Groveland hill,
The survivors discovered
 that they were surrounded
'Twas each man for himself
 "cut your way with a will."
Just seven reached camp
 how they did was a wonder

Boyd, and Parker a sergeant,
 both captive were made,
The foe scalped the dead
 and securing the plunder
Back to Littlebeardstown
 a swift march was made.
To Brandt the great chieftain
 the young men were taken
And safety was promised
 to Boyd by the sign
Of the order that ne'er
 leaves a brother forsaken
But holds all it's members
 in friendship benign.
A call from a courier
 led Brandt from the village,
When Butler the Tory
 took Boyd's case in hand
Incensed and chagrined
 at Sullivan's pillage
He brutally questioned
 and made a demand.
That the captives should tell him
 the army's intention,
Give the number of men,
 of cannon, of horse,
And, failing to tell
 there'd be no intervention
Twixt them and the stake
 without slightest remorse.
Thay-en-dan-egea's promise
 gave Boyd full reliance,
Not the least information
 could Butler obtain,
His questions and threats
 were met with defiance,
And the proud Tory leader
 repeated again
His warning to give up the scouts
 to his warriors
Who thirsted for vengeance
 and longed for the chance

To wreak on the captives
 those fierce primal horrors
The stake and the faggot
 the death song and dance.
Boyd and Parker still clung
 to the hope of protection
With confidence born
 of the heyday of youth
Their patriot blood
 likewise felt the injection
Of fealty to country
 to comrades, to truth.

True to his nature, to his threatenings true
 The Tory chief as heartless as the "brave"
Who, watching for the sign that was his clue,
 Saw Butler make it, then a whoop he gave.

The waiting red men with triumphant shouts
 Rushed on their victims like a mighty scourge
Dragged to their fire the intrepid scouts
 And made their torture song their funeral dirge.

They met their death (and such a death)
 Like brave men fighting side by side,
And history speaks low with bated breath
 When she recounts how Boyd and Parker died.

This was the end of Sullivan's campaign,
 It marked an epoch in our nation's life,
Peace on the border quietly did reign,
 And chance was given for the greater strife.

When peace at last spread out her generous wings
 O'er all the nation, a republic free,
Back came these men of war with wives and household things
 And settled in this country of the Genesee.

Today their prosperous descendants make
 A virile host, a power in the land,
The Seneca is gone, but sweet Conesus lake
 Is just the same, with hills, and woods, and strand.

As when, upon that bright September morn
 Along the slope above her waters head
That little band of scouts, ensnared, forlorn
 Gave up the quota of their country's dead.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 015 906 570 4

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 015 906 570 4