

NIAGARA
1805 to 1875

by
An Old Resident

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NIAGARA.

1805 to 1875.

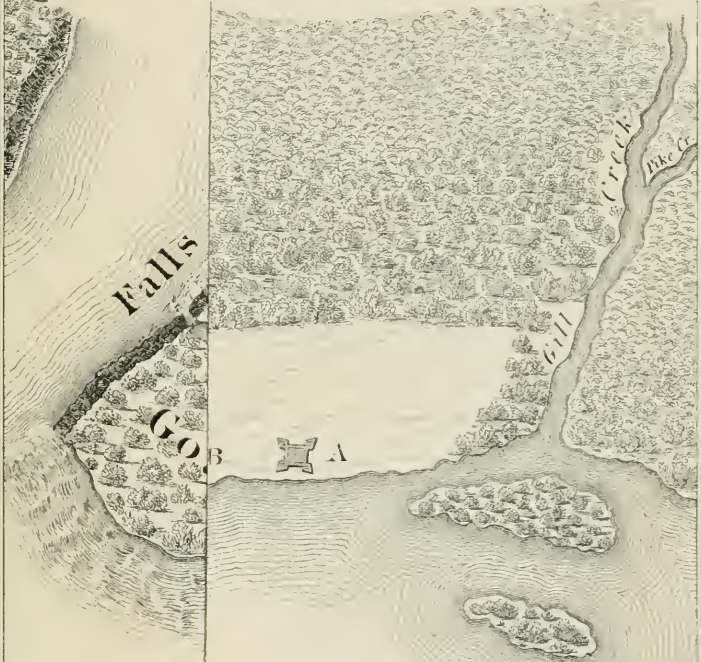




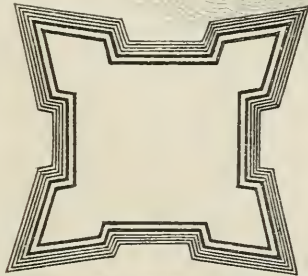
Augustus
BUILT IN

Steadman House.

BUILT IN 1760, BURNED IN 1813.



Fort



Fort Little Niagara.



Augustus Porters House.
BUILT IN 1808, BURNED IN 1813, REBUILT IN 1818.

MAP
OF
NIAGARA FALLS
AND VICINITY
IN 1805.

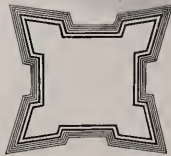


Steadman House.
BUILT IN 1760, BURNED IN 1813.



Fort Schlosser

- A** Fort Little Niagara.
- B** Fort Schlosser.
- C** Steadman House.
- D** Small Duelling.
- E F** Garden and Orchard.
- G** Old French Landing.
- H** Old French Saw Mill.
- I** Old Stockade.
- J K** River Road.
- L** Path to the Falls.
- O** Old Burying Ground.
- P P** Portage Roads.



Fort Little Niagara.

NIAGARA,

FROM 1805 TO 1875,

BY AN OLD RESIDENT.

NIAGARA: PAST AND PRESENT.

THE name Niagara is derived from the Indian, first written Onguiaahra and Ongiara. It is of Iroquois origin, and was pronounced Niàgarah. It is used by Hennepin in its present form. The meaning is doubtful, probably nothing more than high or great fall. No Indian name is known to have been given to Goat Island.

The first historical notice of the Cataract is found in 1535. Cartier, the distinguished French navigator and discoverer, in that year first entered the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and ascended the river to the Indian village of Hochelaga, the site of the present city of Montreal. To him the Indians gave information of the existence of the great lakes, and of a wonderful waterfall between them. The position of the cataract is correctly indicated on Champlain's map of 1632. A long period intervened before French enterprise advanced in this direction, and our local history may be said to date from the expedition of La Salle in 1678. The first description given and the first view presented of the Cataract were by Hennepin in 1679. The height of the fall is greatly exaggerated, but the view indicates no greater changes than might reasonably be expected, from a cause so constant and powerful, in a period of nearly two hundred years.

These reminiscences relate chiefly to the origin and growth of the town situated in the immediate vicinity of the Falls, with a brief historical sketch of the Niagara River and the surrounding country, viewed in relation to discovery and conquest in the interior of America.

The broad region bordering on the St. Lawrence and the lakes has been the theatre of great events, from the early commencement of French colonization to the close of our last war with England.

This was the great waterway by which the French advanced to the Ohio and Mississippi, and acquired, by means of settlements and military posts planted along its borders, the influence and power long exercised over the Indian tribes. The possession of this channel of communication with the interior was to decide the question of sovereignty in America, between France and England.

In this long chain of water communication the Niagara River was an important link. It was the gateway to the regions beyond, and an important crossing place between the lakes. Fort Niagara commanded the passage, and, as a military post, ranked next in importance to Quebec.

Among the hardy and enterprising French discoverers in America in the 17th century, Robert Cavelier de La Salle was the ablest and most successful. With an active and well-stored mind, vigorous constitution, high social position, and influential friends, with an indomitable courage and will, and a love for adventure and discovery, he was especially fitted to overcome the dangers and difficulties to be encountered. In the year 1678, with the approbation of Count Frontinac, Governor of Canada, but chiefly with his own means and the aid of his friends, he fitted out an expedition at Frontinac, and made his first landing at the mouth of Niagara River. There he erected a fort of palisades, the first military occupation of a spot of great future importance. During the winter and spring following, he built at the mouth of Cayuga creek, 4 miles above the Falls, the first vessel that ever floated on the upper lakes, and in the summer of 1679 embarked with his followers for discoveries in the far West. He crossed the lakes safely and advanced far along the Illinois, but failed to reach the Mississippi. Disappointed, but not discouraged, he returned to Canada for a new outfit, and with unabated zeal and courage commenced anew his difficult and dangerous enterprise, and in 1682 reached the Mississippi, and was the first European to navigate the great river from the interior to the Gulf of Mexico. Ten years earlier he had discovered the Ohio, and descended it to the rapids at Louisville. The name of La Salle stands above any

other connected with the early history of Niagara, the great lakes, the Mississippi and Ohio. He died in the wilds of Texas, in 1687, by the hand of an assassin, a martyr in the cause to which he had devoted his life.

De Nonville, at the conclusion of his expedition against the Iroquois, in 1687, advanced to Niagara, and erected more substantial fortifications, which were rebuilt, greatly extended and strengthened in 1725, and occupied by the French until 1759.

For many years, French supremacy over the Indian tribes, save only the Iroquois or Six Nations, was scarcely disputed by the English, and never until the war of 1755 to 1763 seriously endangered; and not until the campaign of 1759, which resulted in the fall of Quebec, Niagara, Ticonderoga and Crown Point, was the French power effectually broken. The surrender, in the following year, of Montreal, Presque Isle, Sandusky, Miami, Detroit and Mackinaw, and other less important posts, completed the conquest, and left England without a rival in America. But though French sovereignty was subverted, French intrigue was still active, in stirring up Indian hostility; and for several years a constant warfare was waged against the frontier posts and border settlements.

Early in 1763 all the Western tribes were united under the famous Ottawa chief, Pontiac, in a simultaneous attack upon all the Western military posts. Mackinaw, Sandusky, Miami, Presque Isle, Le Beouf and Venango were captured and destroyed, and their garrisons murdered or made victims of savage cruelty. Detroit and Fort Pitt were invested for several months, and only saved from capture by heroic valor, through much suffering and blood. The frontier settlements of Virginia and Pennsylvania were invaded, and men, women and children murdered or doomed to captivity and cruelty worse than death itself.

Repeated disasters occurred in the numerous attempts made during the year 1763 to relieve the garrison at Detroit, both on Lake Erie and in our immediate neighborhood. A force composed of six hundred regulars, en route for Detroit, embarked at Fort Schlosser, and a short distance above was attacked by a body

of Senecas and Western Indians, thrown into great confusion, and driven back to the Fort with serious loss. Another disaster of a still more serious character occurred about the same time. An attack was made by the same Indians on a train of wagons and pack horses, with attendants and an armed escort of five and twenty men, at the Devil's Hole, which resulted in the utter destruction of the train and escort, and was quickly followed by another action still more bloody. A body of soldiers, occupying a fortified camp near the lower landing, hearing the report of fire-arms in the first attack, speedily formed and hurried to the rescue. When a mile or more distant, they fell into an Indian ambuscade, and three officers and most of the men were killed. A few escaped and gave the alarm at Fort Niagara. A large force was sent forward immediately. The Indians had all disappeared, but more than seventy bodies were found at the two places of attack, stripped and horribly mutilated.

• The Indian war had become a very serious matter, and could only be brought to a conclusion by energetic measures and a large military force. In the winter following, and preparatory to the opening of the campaign of 1764, Sir William Johnson, the Commissioner for Indian affairs, gave notice to all the Indian tribes of the preparations that were making for prosecuting the war, and urged all who desired peace, and the friendship of the English, to meet him in council at Fort Niagara in the spring. In the meantime, two considerable armies were preparing for the campaign; one to advance from Fort Pitt along the Ohio, the other by way of Niagara to the country along the lakes. The latter reached Niagara early in July.

One of the largest Indian councils ever held, assembled at Niagara to meet Sir William Johnson. More than 2,000 Indian warriors, besides their women and children, were encamped about the Fort. The negotiations were peaceable, but not altogether satisfactory. The Senecas refused to appear, and only submitted when they were threatened with an attack and the destruction of their villages. The threat was effectual, and they not only concluded a treaty of peace, but ceded to the English a strip of land four miles in width, on both sides of the river, thereby

securing free and safe transit between the lakes. Notwithstanding the treaties concluded and the partial submission of the Indians, both armies advanced according to the original design. The Indians sued for peace, and promised good behavior; the power of Pontiac was broken, and the great Indian confederacy was dissolved, never more to be reunited.

That portion of the State of New York embracing the Mohawk and Genesee Valleys, and the country lying between, was first known as the country of the Iroquois—the most warlike and the most powerful of the Indian nations—consisting originally of the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas, called the Five Nations, and afterwards (in 1715) by the admission of the Tuscaroras, the Six Nations. From the earliest period this celebrated confederacy, acting in its united capacity, had been the scourge of surrounding nations, far and near, almost exterminating many tribes, and driving their remnants to seek refuge in the far West. The Hurons inhabiting the country south of Lake Huron, the Neutral nation on the north shore of Lake Erie and Niagara River, the Eries on the south shore of Lake Erie, and the Andastes in the lower valley of the Susquehanna, four powerful tribes, either little inferior to the Iroquois, were within a few years, from 1649 to 1675, utterly subdued and driven from their possessions, by this powerful confederacy. The location of the Iroquois afforded great facilities, by means of water communications through the adjoining lakes and rivers, to push their hostile operations in every direction; and they were never at rest. The numerous powerful French expeditions sent out to humble and conquer these active and troublesome enemies, and the military posts established on their borders, held them in check, but never subdued them; and not until the campaign of 1779, with the army under Gen. Sullivan, were they made to feel that they must finally yield to a superior power. They have always been regarded as possessing the best attributes of savage superiority, but their power was chiefly due to their peculiar family and tribal organizations, and to close union and combined action, in all their warlike operations. General Sullivan's expedition had been sent out to

chastise these hostile tribes for their barbarous conduct at Wyoming and Cherry Valley and elsewhere, in 1778, and to prevent future incursions. The army advanced by way of the Susquehanna and Tioga and Seneca lake to the Genesee river, overcoming all resistance, driving the Indians from their villages, and utterly destroying all their dwellings and crops in the Genesee Valley, on both sides of Seneca and Cayuga lakes, and in all that region. The Indians continued the struggle for two or three years longer, but with the close of the Revolutionary war all organized and open hostility ceased, and the way was opened for peaceful negotiation and permanent settlement. All that remains of this once proud and powerful confederacy, is a small remnant of the Mohawks, on Grand river in Canada, of the Senecas at Allegany, and of the Tuscaroras in our immediate vicinity; and our chief interest now in these tribes consists in their past history, and in the fact that they were once lords and masters of the region in which we dwell.

We have been accustomed to think that the Indian population of America has been reduced chiefly by wars with the whites, and by diseases and vices introduced by them; but a far more powerful cause of the decrease has been in the unceasing wars of extermination carried on among themselves.

These operations, first with the French and Indians, and then with the English and Americans and Indians, form part of our local history, and fill an important place in American history from a very early period.

Soon after the close of the Revolutionary war the conflicting claims of New York and Massachusetts to the territory lying west of Seneca lake were settled by commissioners on behalf of each State, awarding to New York the jurisdiction, and to Massachusetts the ownership, of the soil, subject to the Indian title. With the exceptions already noticed, the Indians were the recognized owners and exclusive occupants of this whole territory.

In 1787, Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham purchased of the State of Massachusetts its entire interest in all the territory referred to, and in 1788 they held a treaty with the Indians by

which they obtained from them a title to the tract lying east of the Genesee river, and also to a tract 12 by 28 miles west of that river. It was not till 1797 that the Indians sold the residue of their lands, lying west of the Genesee river, with the exception of a few thousand acres known as their reservations, to Robert Morris.

The settlement of the lands acquired under the first treaty commenced immediately, though under great difficulties and embarrassments. The country was of course without roads, and only accessible at first by tedious routes of imperfect navigation: on the south by the Susquehanna and Tioga rivers, and on the north by the Mohawk, Oneida Lake and the Seneca river. For many years the Indians were in an excitable state, and by no means friendly. They were still numerous, and undisputed owners of the country lying west of Genesee river. Stimulated by Canadian hatred and jealousy of American interests, they were regarded with fear by the early inhabitants, until after the signal defeat of the western tribes by General Wayne, in 1794.

Our country was just beginning to recover from the exhausting effects of the Revolutionary war, and the people who left their eastern homes for settlement in the new country were generally poor, and with little else than strong arms and brave hearts to sustain them in the toils and hardships of the wilderness. Through great self-denial and patient suffering they toiled on, until Indian alarms ceased, and Indian titles were extinguished. Improved health and comfort followed, after long years of hardship and suffering, and their arduous labors were finally crowned with broad possessions, and a generous competency. But before this happy time arrived to the people residing west of Genesee river, they were especially tried by new sacrifices and sufferings occasioned by the war of 1812. To these we will refer in proper connection, after tracing the history of the immediate neighborhood to that period.

The first occupation of lands in this vicinity was by the French, who erected a small fort, situated near the landing place about a mile above the Falls, the outlines of which may still be traced. It was called Fort Little Niagara, and was destroyed

*Chiefs to whom it was sold to the British by the
not the residue of the Indian, but was a large tract*

and abandoned immediately after the capture of Fort Niagara by Sir William Johnson in 1759. The French also built a saw mill at the Falls, and cleared a few acres of land about their forts and landing places, and on the high river bank opposite Goat Island.

A small block-house fort, called Fort Schlosser, was erected by the English shortly after the destruction of the French fort, not far below it, of which some of the block-houses remained until 1812, and the outlines of which are not yet obliterated. They also erected a large building near the fort, one of the chimneys of which is still standing, which was occupied for several years by John Steadman, who claimed, by virtue of an Indian grant, a large tract of land, bounded by the river and Gill creek, and extending about four miles below the Falls. Steadman planted a large orchard near his house, of which a part yet remains. He also cleared ten or twelve acres on Goat Island, and placed a number of goats on the Island, from which circumstance it derives its name. These all perished in the winter of 1780, memorable for its severity.

Steadman repaired and used the old French saw mill, and cultivated about sixty acres of land surrounding his house. He continued his possession for several years, and made early application to the Legislature of New York to confirm his title. This was denied, and his representative in possession was removed by legal process in 1805. The heirs of Steadman brought suits for the recovery of this land in 1823 without success. The trial of one suit, defended by the chief proprietor, aided by the Attorney General, on behalf of the State, was a matter of considerable interest in bringing to light several similar Indian grants, and the action of the British Government in relation to them.

No other erections or improvements were made previous to 1805, and the Steadman farm, as it is still called, was at that time the only property occupied and improved in the vicinity of the Falls.

Although by the treaty of 1783 Great Britain recognized the great lakes as our northern boundary, yet under various pretexts

Fort Niagara and the other military posts along the northern frontier were not surrendered until 1796, after the ratification of Jay's treaty.

The British forts, George and Erie, were built after the Revolutionary war, and Fort Mississauga after the war of 1812. During the Revolution, British loyalists, or Tories as they were more commonly called, fled from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania to Canada, and made permanent settlements along the Niagara river. Some of the baser sort were banded with the Indians under Butler and Brant in the bloody forays in the Mohawk and Susquehanna Valleys.

In 1791, Robert Morris purchased of the State of Massachusetts all the land ceded by the State of New York, lying west of Phelps and Gorham's purchase, and soon after sold about three millions of acres, with an agreement to extinguish the Indian title, to the Holland Land Company. All land titles in Niagara and several adjoining counties are derived from that Company, excepting for lands included in the New York State Reservation, of one mile in width, lying along the Niagara river.

In 1789, Ontario County included all that part of the State lying west of Seneca lake. In 1802, Genesee included all west of Genesee river, and in 1808, Niagara, including the present counties of Erie and Niagara, was organized, of which Augustus Porter was first Judge, Asa Ransom Sheriff, and Louis Le Cou-toulx County Clerk.

The only road leading to this region, previous to 1800, was what was known for many years as the old Queenston road, extending from Genesee river and Batavia to Lewiston and Fort Niagara. There was no wagon road on this side of the river from the Falls to Buffalo. In 1801, the United States Government had directed General Moses Porter, then in command of Fort Niagara, to employ his troops in opening a road, by the most direct route, to connect Fort Niagara with a fort then in contemplation, to be built on the high bluff at Black Rock. This road, still known as the military road, was opened from the top of the mountain at Lewiston, by a course as direct as possible,

to Tonawanda, and thence by a straight course two or three miles onward, so far as to cut and burn the timber for an opening six rods in width. No bridges were built, and no other work done to render it passable. In consequence of a disagreement between the General Government and State authorities, the work was discontinued, much to the injury of both parties, as was afterwards shown. If the road had been completed it would greatly have enhanced the value of the lands along the river, the property of the State, and would have benefited the General Government in much higher degree in facilitating transportation, and the movement of troops in the war of 1812. The Portage road, first terminating at the place still known as the French Landing, and afterwards at Fort Little Niagara, was opened at an early day by the French, to facilitate military operations, and was guarded at each end by the little forts, and along the way by several small stockades, one of which is still clearly defined, covered with trees of a hundred years' growth.

In the year 1805, the State of New York first offered the lands along the Niagara river for sale, and Augustus and Peter B. Porter, and Benjamin Barton and Joseph Annin, jointly, purchased largely of the lands at Lewiston, Niagara Falls and Black Rock, and elsewhere along the river.

Augustus Porter first visited the Falls in 1795, and again in 1796, on his way with a large company of surveyors to explore and survey what is known as the Western Reserve, in the State of Ohio, at that time constituting part of the great Northwestern Territory. His first impressions of the advantages of this locality were decidedly favorable. Taking into view its position, on what was then, and in all probability would ever be, the great thoroughfare from east to west, with the vast water power that, as settlement advanced, must become very valuable, he could not but regard it as a point worthy of attention whenever the land should be opened for sale and improvement. These views influenced him and his associates in the purchase of the lands referred to, with reference to immediate occupation and improvement. Early in 1805 he built a saw mill and blacksmith's

shop on the joint property, preparatory to other improvements. In 1806 he removed his family from Canandaigua to the old Steadman house, near Fort Schlosser, and prepared for active operations. The journey was made in five days. Ten or twelve days would have been required at that time to have made the journey from Albany; twelve years afterwards the mail stage was five days from Albany to Buffalo. In 1807, Benjamin Barton settled at Lewiston, and Peter B. Porter at Black Rock in 1810.

Previous to 1806, little had been done to change the wild aspect of the country. Bears were common in the forests, and wolves so numerous as to prevent the keeping of sheep for many years after, and so bold as frequently to approach by night within a short distance of the Steadman House, and their hideous nightly howlings were familiar sounds in all the region around the Falls. Wild geese and ducks abounded in the river, and deer and smaller animals were inviting game. Deer were frequently seen on Goat Island. On one occasion a deer was seen to make his way safely through the rapids from Goat Island to the main shore; and another, driven to the lower end of the island, made a desperate and fatal leap through the cedars and over the precipice.

Previous to 1812, most of the large forest trees north of Bridge street had been cut down, but young trees and undergrowth, particularly near the river, grew very thick and close, quite down to the Falls.

On the Canadian side, with the exception of a small plat where Barnett's Museum now stands, the whole flat, from Table Rock to the Clifton House, was a swamp, covered chiefly with cedars. Cedars also grew thickly on the declivities below the perpendicular bank on both sides of the river, adding much to the general effect of the scenery. For several years the descent to the ferry below the Falls was down the rugged precipice, near the present inclined plain, with the aid only of bushes growing out of the crevices of the rocks, and by means of logs placed at an inclination, with notches cut for steps, answering the purpose of ladders. The river crossing was made in a com-

mon canoe. At a latter period an improvement was made on the primitive plan, by long ladders connected and extended from the top to the bottom of the precipice; and this was followed by a much more safe and convenient arrangement, substituting for the ladders, a square timber frame, enclosed and provided with easy winding steps. Larger and safer boats were used for ferriage, and this, though apparently the most dangerous, has proved the safest ferry on the river.

In connection with the purchase of lands along the river, as before stated, and with a view to extended business operations, Augustus Porter and his associates obtained from the State a long lease of the landing places at Lewiston and Schlosser, with the exclusive right of transporting property across the portage, they being required to erect warehouses and provide teams, to meet all demands for transportation, at reasonable rates. In aid of this business, they were induced to build a number of vessels on Lakes Erie and Ontario, and boats on the river, so that for several years transportation by this route was chiefly carried on by the firm of Porter, Barton & Co. They supplied the military posts along the lake frontier, and sent frequent cargoes of goods, and return cargoes of furs, for the extensive Indian trade of that period. In the war of 1812 their vessels were purchased by the United States Government, and added to the armed fleets on the lakes. In 1807, the first grist mill at the Falls was built by them, and in order to obtain the force required to raise the frame, they were obliged to send to Fort Niagara for a detachment of soldiers.

In 1808, Augustus Porter erected his dwelling house, which was destroyed in the war of 1812, and rebuilt on the same site in 1818. About the same time he built a rope walk to manufacture rigging for vessels on the lakes, both British and American, the supply of hemp being raised on the flats of Genesee River. Other improvements soon followed: a tannery, a carding and cloth dressing establishment, several shops, a comfortable log tavern, and a number of dwelling houses. A few settlements were made along the river above Fort Schlosser and on the military road. But the country was unhealthy, and

the progress of improvement very slow. The following persons were residents of this village previous to 1812: James Everingham, John W. Stoughton, Wm. Van Norman, Adoram Everingham, Joshua Fairchild, Ebenezer Hovey, Wm. Chapman, James Armstrong, John Sims, Jacob Hovey, Ezekiel Hill, Ralph Coffin, Ebenezer Brundage and Oliver Udall. The following persons had purchased and settled on lands on the river and military roads: James Fields, Jacob Gilbert, Gad Pierce, Parkhurst Whitney, John and Abraham Wetmer, and Christian and Samuel Young.

The war of 1812 was a serious interruption to the progress of settlement and improvement here, and in all the surrounding country, and subjected the people to great sacrifices and sufferings.

It was commenced without preparation, and for a long time was attended with disaster and disgrace. The militia were called out by thousands for defence and invasion, and, in their undisciplined state, were insufficient for either. Immediately on the declaration of war most of the families on the Niagara frontier removed to the interior, but generally returned to their homes and remained until December, 1813, when the British and their Indian allies invaded and laid waste our defenceless frontier.

Buildings and property of every description were destroyed, and many unresisting persons killed, and others only escaping with their lives, were, in many cases, reduced to extreme want and suffering. At this place nothing was saved, except two or three small dwellings and the log tavern, which were set on fire but extinguished by persons on hand, after the hasty departure of the enemy. No buildings were erected or repairs made until the close of the war.

Though our people shared largely in the losses and discouragements resulting from our numerous failures and defeats during the first years of the war, they had also occasions for exultation in our successes. The disgraceful surrender of General Hull at Detroit, the disastrous result of the attempted invasion of Canada at Queenston, and the destruction of their

homes and property, and the capture of Fort Niagara by the enemy in 1813, were fully offset by the successes of General Harrison at the West, the hard fought battles on the Niagara frontier, the defeat of the invading army at Plattsburgh, the glorious victories of Perry and McDonough, resulting in the complete defeat and capture of both the British fleets. These, with the no less brilliant achievements of Hull, Bambridge, Decatur, Stewart, Porter and others on the ocean, occasioned universal rejoicing, and inspired strong confidence in our final success. The battles of Niagara and Chippewa, the repulse of the enemy in their assault on Fort Erie, and the gallant and successful sortie from that fort, by which the batteries of the enemy were captured and the siege raised, were among the bloodiest and most bravely contested battles of the war. Though no direct advantage was gained by the war, it had the important effect of teaching England thereafter to respect our rights by sea and land, as she had not previously done.

One battle scene of the war, ever to be remembered by the many spectators who witnessed it, was that of the landing of our army in Canada, and the capture and destruction of Fort George. Our army designed for the invasion of Canada, under the command of General Dearborn, had been encamped on the shore of Lake Ontario for several days. On a bright, beautiful morning in June, 1813, the order was given for the army to embark on a large number of boats provided for the purpose. As soon as the embarkation was completed, the flotilla, preceded by the fleet, commanded by Commodore Chauncey, moved slowly towards the point of attack. At the same time a heavy cannonade with hot shot was commenced from Fort Niagara, and the batteries near Youngstown, on the works at Fort George. The inner works of the fort were constructed of heavy timber and block work, in which the hot shot made a lodgement, and in a few hours the fort was demolished and burned. The fleet, consisting of fifteen or twenty vessels, large and small, was drawn up in a semi-circle in the lake, near the mouth of the river, around the point on which Fort Mississauga now stands, to cover the landing of

the army, and opened fire along the whole line upon the British forces posted on the bank and plain above. As the boats approached the shore, the enemy opened a well directed fire, and made a spirited resistance for some time, but were finally routed, and our army marched directly to the fort, where our flag was soon displayed. The whole movement, including the destruction of the fort, the embarkation and landing of the army, the battle and the final rout, was witnessed by a large number of spectators from the banks of the lake and river and the plain around Niagara. Shortly before the battle commenced, the batteries of the enemy, which had remained silent all the morning, opened upon the fleet, and upon all our forces and defences. Shells burst frequently over the plain, and the fragments sometimes fell near groups of spectators, scattering them, but not much diverting their attention from the interesting scene before them. Most of them remained to witness the destruction of the fort and the close of the battle.

We trust that the scourge of war may never revisit these borders, and that old animosities may never be revived between kindred people.

The early colonists of America, from the rival nations of France and England, long cherished their hereditary animosities, and our two wars with England taught us to look upon Canada in no friendly light. Separated, too, by the great natural boundary of the lakes and the river St. Lawrence, our intercourse was for a long time far from being free and friendly. But this wide and deep boundary, unlike that of the English Channel, the Alps, or the Pyrenees, which must ever separate nations, no longer forms a barrier to free intercourse. The increase of international commerce, through the lakes, and the numerous and extensive lines of railroads, connected by the great bridges at Montreal and Niagara, have had a marked effect in removing all unfriendliness, and in harmonizing commercial and social relations between the two countries, so as to render it certain that, at no distant day, they will form one vast country under the same institutions, extending from ocean to ocean, and from the Gulf of Mexico to the frozen regions of the North.

Looking at the condition of the settlers West of Genesee river, previous to the war of 1812, we find that a large portion of them were poor and in embarrassed circumstances. A small class, with more ample means, owners of large tracts of land, men of enterprise and capital, were making valuable improvements, opening roads, building mills, and in various ways converting the timber and other products of the country so as best to promote the progress of settlement and improvement. Between these two classes of men there was then a distinction, now wholly unknown. The large landholders and active capitalists, with the property qualification then required of voters—which was finally abolished by the Constitution adopted in 1821—exercised the chief political power. The great majority found full employment at home, in the support of their families and the improvement of their farms. But notwithstanding this difference in outward circumstances, the most friendly and familiar relations existed between them. Few made any display of their more prosperous condition, and all maintained their self-respect and independence, and were unbounded in acts of kindness and generosity, and liberal in hospitality, according to their circumstances. Farmers were ever ready to aid one another in cases of sickness and misfortune, and to exchange labor of men and teams in clearing land and gathering crops, in plowing and sowing, and even occasions of merry-making and social enjoyments, called “bees,” were turned to profitable account. In primitive phrase, the latch-string was always out, and all were made welcome around the broad hearth, and before the great wood fire and generously supplied table, in the comfortable log dwelling. Such hospitality loses nothing by comparison, for where there is more of show and ceremony there is likely to be less of sincerity and cordiality. Men of liberal means not only reciprocated hospitalities with their immediate neighbors and friends, but extended like favors to strangers introduced by mutual friends. Taverns, or inns as they were generally called, were not very commodious in that day, and gentlemen visiting the country usually came supplied with letters of introduction, and were always kindly welcomed and

entertained. Much was formerly claimed for Southern hospitality, but nowhere was the term more justly applied than to the early settlers, of all conditions, in Western New York.

The habits and customs of the people have greatly changed since that period; there is more wealth and a great deal more display, but some of the best attributes of society have sadly degenerated. This is especially true in regard to the sympathies of common brotherhood, which are nowhere found more strong and active than among the inhabitants of a new country. The people were plain and honest, frugal and industrious. Few persons in this progressive age will admit that the olden time was better than the new, yet it cannot be denied that the fearful increase of crime, and the sad corruption of morals, now so obvious, both in public and private life, are legitimate fruits of wealth and luxury, and of the overweening greed for money, so characteristic of the present times.

Looking back to early times, there is no object more interesting than the old log school-house, and no character more worthy of remembrance than the country school-master. The model country school-house was built of logs with the bark on, dove-tailed at the corners, in size about twenty by twenty-four feet, a door on the front side near the corner, a broad stone chimney back, chimney of sticks plastered on the inside with clay, two large stones for andirons, windows on three sides, ten or twelve feet long and two feet high, writing tables arranged along the sides, and benches made of slabs, flat side up, with logs inserted in augur holes, so high as to accommodate the older pupils and keep the younger ones in order from the fear of falling off. The furniture was completed by the addition of a birch of good proportions, resting on two pegs driven into a log, in a conspicuous place. Such a school-house was the first built in our village; it stood by the road side, north of Ontario street, near the Hydraulic canal. The school books in use were Noah Webster's Spelling-book, Dr. Jedediah Morse's Geography, Daboll's Arithmetic, Lindley Murray's English Grammar, and the English Reader, a selection from the best English authors—a list of school books that compares very favorably with any since intro-

duced. The teachers, at least many of them, had peculiar characteristics, soon understood by their pupils, and never forgotten. A few of these men who were early employed in our village school, were fair samples of the order.

The first was a bachelor, well advanced, with a fair English education, and a smattering of Latin. When he applied the birch, as he often did, with no sparing hand, he did not fail to assure the victim that he would thank him for his faithfulness, to the end of his days. He was an ardent Jeffersonian Democrat, and fully adopted the sentiment, and often repeated the democratic shibboleth of that day, *Vox populi, Vox Dci*.

He had an infirmity of vision, as much concealed as aided by the glasses he wore, a circumstance that his pupils sometimes miscalculated to their sorrow. Like most old bachelors, he had been disappointed in early love, and had a habit of soliloquizing aloud on the subject. Of course he had a tenderness for young lady pupils, that relieved, in a degree, the severity of his discipline, not only towards them, but towards their offending brothers and favorites.

“A man severe he was, and stern to view,
I knew him well, and every truant knew.
But passed is all his fame, and e'en the spot
Where he once proudly triumphed is forgot.”

The second was a younger man of more general temperament, who added to his other qualifications some taste and skill in drawing, which he turned to good account, in drawing men and beasts, and birds, and fancy sketches, as rewards of merit. He had a vein of humor that sometimes displayed itself in original and ridiculous forms of punishment. As for instance, in the case of a miss of fourteen, where discipline and example seemed necessary, instead of adopting the usual form of punishment, he called her to his seat, and taking her on his knees, and gently holding her with one hand, and with the other elevating her club of carefully braided hair, like a barber's pole, he gave her a smart trotting, with a merry song and lively air, to the great mortification of the young lady, and to the unbounded satisfaction and uproarious delight of the whole school.

He was a man of genius, ready wit,
Fond of a joke, careless of where it hit.

The third was a man of decided amiability, and a more painstaking and successful teacher. According to the general custom of teachers, he boarded around in the families of his pupils, for a longer or shorter time, proportioned to the number of scholars in each. He had a fondness for music, that always made him an acceptable guest. He was a universal favorite, not only for his merits as a teacher, and for the mildness of his discipline, but for his marked attention to the mothers and elder sisters of his pupils, assisting the mothers in the care of the younger children, and aiding the daughters in more sociable and agreeable employments.

He was a man, genial and kind, and true,
The mothers loved him, and the daughters too ;
And take him all in all, you seek in vain
To find a pedagogue like him again.

Such were our educational advantages. Our religious privileges, outside of family instruction, were so few and small as to be scarcely noticeable. For many years after our settlement commenced, public religious services were of rare occurrence. The Methodist pioneers, who, in post-Revolutionary times, kept step with the advance of settlement westward, with scarcely less zeal than was manifested by the early French Jesuits for the Indians, were uncultivated, but earnest and enterprising men, devoted to their arduous work. But the settlements were scattered far and wide, and the visits of these worthy men were few and far between, and probably not a half-dozen public religious services were ever held here previous to the close of the war in 1815.

Returning to our narrative, at the conclusion of the war most of the former inhabitants returned ; the mills and dwellings were rebuilt ; Parkhurst Whitney repaired and enlarged the old tavern house, so as to make it a very comfortable resort for travelers. Samuel De Veaux built a store, and settled as a merchant in the village ; transportation over the portage was resumed, and two or three years of peace repaired the ravages

of war. The year 1816 was a very unfavorable one, through the country. Monthly frosts through the whole season cut off the crops; provisions were very dear, and money scarce; but, with a succession of more productive seasons, the country became comparatively prosperous. In 1816, Augustus Porter purchased Goat Island of the State, and erected a bridge to connect it with the main shore, from a point near the head of the Island. This bridge proved insufficient to resist the strong current and heavy masses of ice at that point, and was partially carried away the first winter and spring. In 1818, another bridge was constructed across the rapids below, on the site of the present bridge, which has proved to be a perfectly secure position. For the old bridge of wood the present bridge of iron was substituted, in 1856.

A carding and cloth-dressing establishment was erected by James Ballard in 1816, afterwards enlarged by D. & S. Chapman, and the manufacture of woolen cloth and satinet carried on by them. In 1819-20, Parkhurst Whitney built a large addition to his tavern, giving it the name of Eagle Tavern. In 1821, a forge and rolling mill and a nail factory were erected and operated by Bolls & Gay. In 1822, Augustus Porter erected the large flouring mill now owned by Wetmore Brothers. In 1823, a paper mill was built by Jesse Symonds, near Goat Island bridge. In 1826, the upper race was extended, and Ira Cook, Wm. G. Tuttle, Capin & Swallow, and others, erected works of different kinds upon it. In 1826, a large paper mill was built on Bath Island by Porter & Clark, which has been greatly extended by L. C. Woodruff. In 1825, the Erie canal was completed, and a large water power was drawn from it, at Lockport and elsewhere, which had the effect to check improvement here, and transfer it to the line of the Erie canal, consequently little addition was made to population or business at this place for several years.

In 1836, a year of extravagant speculation throughout the country, Benjamin Rathbun, a well-known hotel-keeper, builder and speculator in real estate, made large contracts for the purchase of real estate, in this village and vicinity. He built a

large addition to the Eagle Hotel, and laid the foundation for an extensive hotel on the square, now occupied by the International Hotel. The village plan was greatly enlarged, and he commenced a sale of lots at auction, with great promise of success, in the midst of which the bubble burst, by his sudden and unexpected failure, with injurious effects to our village, and with disaster and ruin to many of his numerous friends in Buffalo, the seat of his most extensive operations.

In December, 1837, during the Canadian rebellion, an affair occurred at what is now known as the Gill Creek, or upper landing, about two miles above the Falls, of some historical interest, known as the "Caroline affair." A small American steamer called the Caroline had been employed for several days in transporting men and supplies, in connection with a large military force, composed chiefly of American citizens, occupying Navy Island, and threatening the invasion of Canada. It being well known that the steamer was moored at night at the dock on the American shore, an expedition, conducted by Alexander McLeod, left Chippewa in the night, reaching the American shore unobserved, captured the steamer, dispersing the crew, and leaving one man dead on the dock. The steamer was towed into the river, set on fire, and left to drift over the Falls. This high-handed act excited great popular indignation, and, for a time, seriously threatened the peace of the two countries. The matter was finally settled, and friendly relations restored.

The railroads to Buffalo and Lockport, opened in 1836, and though slightly built, answered a very good purpose, for the light traffic and travel of that period, and served greatly to relieve our village in the general reaction of 1836, and the embarrassments of several years following.

In 1845, the inclined plane at the ferry, with cars operated by water power, was substituted for the old plan of winding stairs, previously used.

In 1852, the railroad to Lockport was rebuilt and extended to connect with the Eastern railroad at Rochester.

In 1853, the Canandaigua and Niagara Falls railroad, by way of Batavia, was completed.

The first suspension bridge across the Niagara river, intended only as a temporary work by which to construct the permanent bridge, was erected by Charles Elliott, 1848. The great railroad bridge was completed in 1855, on the plans and under the personal superintendence of John A. Robling, who, shortly before his death, made the plans and commenced the work of the great Suspension Bridge now building between New York and Brooklyn. The new suspension carriage bridge near the Falls, was opened for travel in 1869, and fully completed soon after. Both these bridges have proved successful and profitable.

The first steamboat was launched on the river below the Falls in 1848, and was succeeded by a larger and stronger one in 1854. In 1861, the latter, proving unprofitable, was safely navigated through the rapids to Lewiston. A similar feat, though unattended with risk to human life, was performed from above the Falls in 1829. As a matter of experiment and curiosity, an old schooner was sent over the Falls. Her passage through the rapids was, of course, a very rough one, and she was completely waterlogged before reaching the Falls, but she was so skillfully directed towards the center of the horseshoe that, though submerged twelve or fifteen feet, she passed smoothly over, showing the great depth of water at that point.

The Cataract House was built, in part, by David Chapman in 1824, and has been enlarged from time to time to its present great extent by P. Whitney & Sons. The International Hotel, built by B. F. Childs, and enlarged by J. T. Bush, occupying the site of the primitive log tavern, ranks with the Cataract House among the largest and best conducted hotels anywhere to be found. The Spencer House and Niagara House here, and the Monteagle Hotel at Suspension Bridge, are all of more recent date, and are all of them hotels of high character and large capacity.

The Hydraulic Canal, which extends from deep water above the rapids, to the high bank below the Falls, is a work of much importance to the convenient use of our great water power. It effectually obviates all inconvenience from ice, and affords an abundant supply of water, with a fall practically unlimited.

Judge Porter, who owned the lands through which this canal passed, early saw its importance, and, for many years before his death, made the most liberal offers to capitalists to engage in the undertaking, involving an expense greater than his own means would afford. His heirs, believing in his estimate of the importance of the work, finally succeeded in securing the means necessary for this great public improvement, by a free gift of the water power, and of about seventy acres of land, lying in the village, adjoining the lower end of the canal. The canal was completed several years ago, but for various reasons only recently improved.

In the fall of 1874, two of our enterprising business men purchased one of the mill seat lots, and erected upon it a large flouring mill, which was completed about the first of February, 1875, and was in constant operation through the coldest portion of the coldest winter on record, without the slightest interruption from ice, or any other cause. This mill, valuable in itself, has an additional value, in demonstrating the perfection of our water power, and will doubtless lead to its extended use for other manufacturing establishments, greatly for the benefit of our village, and a gratifying proof of the correct judgment and liberal policy of the original proprietors.

The first common school was opened in this town in 1807, and good schools have ever since been maintained. In 1851 and 1854, two large stone school-houses, each of three stories, were erected in the village. In 1852, an Academy was built, and conducted with much success, as a classical school, for several years. The building is now occupied for educational purposes, on a different plan. Free schools were established in 1855. Samuel De Veaux, an early settler and much esteemed citizen, who died in 1854, made a large bequest for the establishment of an institution for the support and education of orphan boys. The trust was faithfully and successfully executed, and the institution known as De Veaux College, located near Suspension Bridge, has been for several years in successful operation.

Church Societies were formed in this town in the following

order: Methodist in 1815; Presbyterian in 1816; Episcopal in 1830; Baptist in 1848; Catholic in 1848. Public religious services were held in the school-house for several years, until a small union church was built by the Methodists and other denominations, leaving the Presbyterians to occupy the school-house exclusively, until that denomination built a church on the south-east corner of Fall and First streets in 1831. The Methodists built in 1843; the Episcopalians in 1847; the Presbyterian, the church now occupied by them, in 1849, selling their first church to the Methodists; the Catholics in 1849; the Methodists, the new church on First street in 1871; the Episcopalians, the new church not yet completed, on the corner of Union and Second streets, 1873.

The Congregationalist Society at Suspension Bridge was organized in 1855, and their church built in 1858; the Episcopal in 1859, and their church built in 1866. Other societies have been formed at that place within a few years.

Weekly newspapers have been published at the Falls, as follows: "Iris of Niagara," by Geo. H. Hackstaff, from 1847 to 1854; "Niagara Falls Times," by W. E. Tunis, 1855 to 1857; "Niagara Falls Gazette," by Pool & Sleeper, in 1854, and since 1864, by Wm. Pool, its present publisher. At Suspension Bridge, several papers under different names have been published since 1855. The "Suspension Bridge Journal," established by Lescom & Son in 1870, is still published there.

Gas works were established in 1860, by which gas is supplied to both villages, and also conveyed to Canada by a pipe laid on Suspension Bridge. In addition to the buildings already named, our village contains shops for various purposes, operated by water power, and all the trades and occupations common in ordinary towns. A large number of mechanics are employed in the extensive building and repairing shops of the Central Railroad Company. We have also four dry good stores, six or more grocery and provision, two hardware, two boot and shoe, two druggists and two jewelers, also a large number of fancy and variety stores, supplied with rare and beautiful goods, sold in large quantities to visitors at the Falls. A number of artists

are constantly employed in the manufacture of photographic views of the Falls by thousands, for which they have orders from all the large towns and cities. We have also four ministers, four lawyers, three physicians, and a number of teachers teachers for our public and private schools.

The present population of the village of Niagara Falls is about 3,500, and that of the village of Suspension Bridge about 2,500.

Our village possesses great advantages, both natural and artificial, in its healthful atmosphere, its unequalled water power, its extended railroad connections, its magnificent bridges and hotels, and in the world-wide fame of the great cataract. These advantages insure a certain and steady, if not rapid, growth. That it did not improve as rapidly as the early settlers had hoped, was owing to causes not at first foreseen, but now well understood. Situated on the great natural channel of communication, between the lakes and the ocean, it was reasonable to expect that, with the improvement of the country, near and remote, the vast water power, so favorably situated, would be rapidly improved, with the usual result of capital and enterprise. But before the village had recovered from the effects of the war, and while the surrounding country, suffering from that and other embarrassments, was making very slow progress in improvement, at the early period of 1825, the Erie canal was opened in its full extent. The immediate effect was to divert all the business of transportation from the old channel, and attract all enterprise and capital, seeking employment, to the numerous villages growing up on the line of the canal. Another injurious effect of the canal on this locality, though beneficial to the new villages, was the large water power it afforded, at points where little or none had previously existed; at Black Rock, Lockport, Medina and other towns west of Rochester, adding greatly to their growth, and proportionally lessening ours.

There is one point of view in which we regard our locality with peculiar interest. Considering the vast and uniform flow of water, with a fall of more than 300 feet in a distance of

seven miles, we should naturally expect great changes to have taken place, and we may well credit some of the plausible and interesting theories of geologists, based upon a cause so powerful, operating through an unlimited period. Changes have probably occurred at no very remote period in the bed of the river, opposite and above Goat Island, with little or no disturbance of the rock formation. Goat Island has undoubtedly been much larger than at present, covering the extensive shoal lying above it, and has been gradually reduced to its present dimensions by the rapid current flowing along its sides, an operation that would have swept away the whole island, but that the part now remaining is based on a rock formation, rising at the head above the level of the river, and shielded on both sides by a number of small islands or masses of rocks, securing it against the action of water or ice, outposts and guards against further encroachment. Great changes in the Falls have taken place since Hennepin's view was taken; and within little more than half a century, within the memory of many persons still residing here, rocks have fallen in immense masses, materially changing the contour of the Falls. A large portion of Table Rock fell in 1818. Another fall occurred in the bed of the river, extending several hundred feet outward from Table Rock, in 1828. Again, another portion of Table Rock in 1850, and again in 1852, another large mass of rock near Goat Island, westward. Smaller portions of rock are frequently falling, in both channels of the river, of which no particular note is taken. Hereafter, changes that occur may be more definitely described. In 1842, James Hall, State Geologist, assisted by E. M. Blackwell, of Buffalo, made a careful trigonometrical survey of the Falls and vicinity, planting permanent stone monuments, and inserting copper bolts in the rocks at prominent points, on both sides of the river and on Goat Island. This survey, made by authority of the State, with a map showing the points and bearings, is published in the natural history of the State of New York. A re-survey from the same points will show, by comparison with the survey of 1842, any important changes that may have taken place. Future changes in the configuration of the

Falls may also be detected hereafter by comparison with numerous views taken by distinguished artists, and, with still greater certainty, with the unerring guide of photographic views taken from every accessible point above and below the Falls.

To us who have lived for many years within sight and hearing of the great cataract, Niagara is a household word, associated with our earliest and happiest recollections. Long familiarity has in no degree lessened its grandeur or moral power. There is an enchantment in the scene, strongly felt by persons who have lived long within its influence, scarcely to be found elsewhere. Nowhere is the great law of change more impressively taught. Generation succeeds generation, and all the works of human skill and labor perish; here we have illustrated most impressively the great fact that change, slow, but sure and unmistakable, is passing upon the very rocks, and that they too are yielding to the all-subduing power of natural forces.

One point of deepest interest still claims our notice. It will readily occur to all that we refer to our pleasant rural cemetery, situated on the high ground, beyond the limits of the village, where a numerous company are already gathered, and where many of us expect to find our final resting place. Here rest the pioneers of the wilderness, their toils all ended, and a rich inheritance transmitted to their children. Here too repose the martyrs of the great Rebellion, their battles ended, and their cause victorious. And side by side with these are loving friends and dearest kindred, over whose graves we linger in fond remembrances of the past, and bright hopes of the future. Even in that retired spot, the associations of the cataract meet us. As we follow our friends, one after another, to their last earthly resting place, where all else is quiet, the roar of the cataract falls heavily on our ears, suggesting the sublime thought, that this *Voice of Many Waters* will be their ceaseless requiem, until the *Trump of the Resurrection*, rising above all earthly sounds, shall hush it in everlasting silence.

See page 30, Parkman on Cataract, 'Bancroft
on the Siege & Capture of Fort Niagara

NOTES.

I.

Parkman in his history, *Discovery of the Great West*, thus refers to La Salle's expedition to the mouth of the Mississippi in 1681 and 1682 :

“And now they neared their journey's end. On the 6th of April the river divided itself into three broad channels. La Salle followed that of the west, D'Au-tray the east, and Tonty the middle passage. He drifted down the turbid current, between low and marshy shores, and then the broad bosom of the great Gulf opened on his sight, tossing its restless billows limitless, voiceless, lonely, as when born of chaos, without a sail, without a sign of life. The re-united parties assembled on a dry spot of ground, a short distance above the mouth of the river. Here a column was made ready, bearing the arms of France, and inscribed with the words, 'Louis le Grand, Roy de France, et de Navarre Regne, Avril 9th, 1682.' The Frenchmen were mustered under arms ; they chanted the Te Deum, the Exaudiat, and the Domine Sal-vum fac Regem, and then, amid volleys of musketry, and shouts of Vive le Roy, La Salle planted the column in its place, and in a loud voice proclaimed, 'in the name of the most high, mighty, invincible and victorious Prince Louis the Great, by the grace of God, King of France and Navarre, Fourteenth of that name, I, in virtue of the commission of his Majesty, have taken, and do now take, in the name of his Majesty and his successors to the crown, possession of this country of Louisiana.' On that day the realm of France received on parchment a stupendous accession. The Louisiana of to-day, is but a single State of the American Republic. The Louisiana of La Salle stretched from the Alleghanies to the Rocky Mountains ; from the Rio Grande and the Gulf, to the farthest springs of the Missouri. La Salle had written his name in history.”

II.

Bancroft, in his *History of the United States*, describes the siege and capture of Fort Niagara in 1759, as follows :

“The British General Prideaux, who commanded the United American and British forces, with the Indian auxiliaries, under Sir William Johnson, embarked at Oswego on the 1st of July, and landed without opposition six miles east of the junction of the Niagara. The fortress on the peninsula was easily invested. Aware of the importance of the station, D'Aubray collected from Detroit, Erie, Le Beouf and Venango a little army of twelve hundred men, and marched to the rescue. Prideaux made the best dispositions to frustrate the design ; but on the 15th of July he was killed, and Sir William Johnson succeeded to the command. He posted the British army on the left, above the fort, so as to intercept the approach of the enemy, and to support the guard in the trenches. On the morning of the 24th of July, the French made their appearance. The Mohawks gave a sign for a parley with the French Indians ; but as it was not returned, they gave the war-whoop. While the regulars advanced to meet the French in front, the English Indians gained their flanks, and threw them into disorder ; on which, the English rushed to the charge, with irresistible fury. The French broke, retreated, and were pursued. The carnage continued, till fatigue stayed its hand. The bodies of the dead lay uncounted among the forests. On the next day, the garrison, consisting of about six hundred men, capitulated. Thus did New York extend its limits to the Niagara River and Lake Erie.”



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