

**MEMOIRS AND LETTERS AND
JOURNALS OF MAJOR
GENERAL RIEDESEL, DURING HIS
RESIDENCE IN AMERICA. VOL. II**

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Memoirs and Letters and Journals of Major General Riedesel, During His Residence in America. Vol. II by Friedrich Adolf Riedesel & William L. Stone

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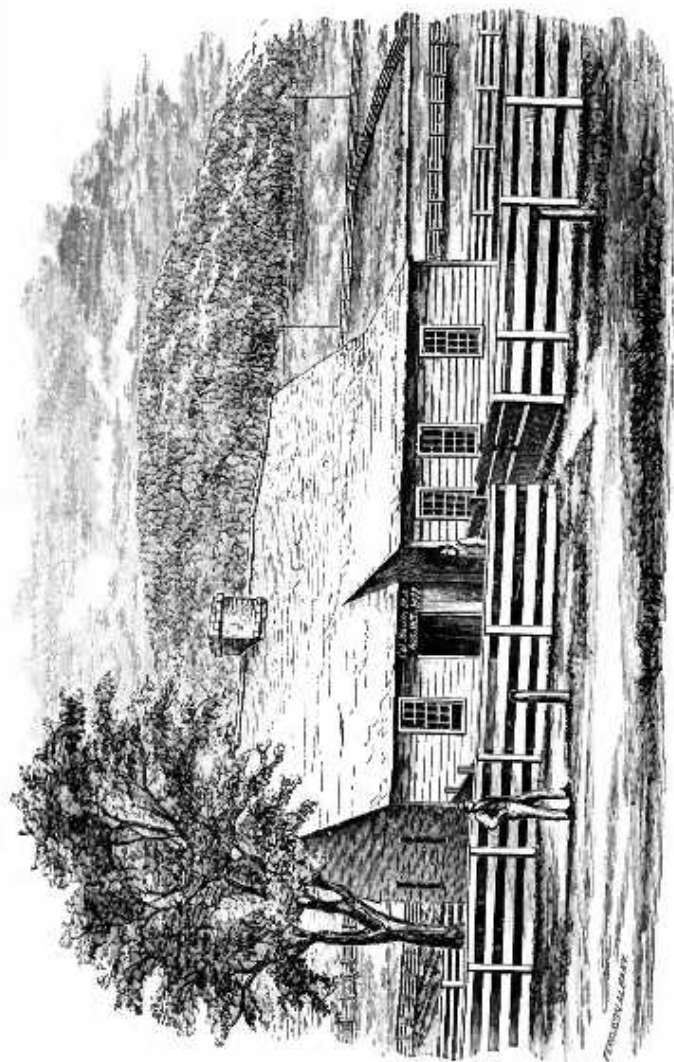
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The House in which Col. Baum died, 16 Aug., 1777. Built by D. Matthews, and taken down 1861.

MEMOIRS,
AND
LETTERS AND JOURNALS,
OF
MAJOR GENERAL RIEDESEL,
DURING HIS
RESIDENCE IN AMERICA.

TRANSLATED
FROM THE ORIGINAL GERMAN OF MAX VON EELKING.

BY
WILLIAM L. STONE,
AUTHOR OF THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON, BART. ;
LIFE AND WRITINGS OF COL. WILLIAM L. STONE, ETC., ETC.

VOL. II.



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1868.
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SKETCH OF MAJ. GEN. RIEDESEL.

1778.

The poorest prospects were now in store for the German troops; for who would take their part under their present circumstances, so far away from their own land? It was evident that congress had broken the treaty. The English government could not consistently enter into direct negotiations with congress, as it was unwilling to acknowledge its authority; and, consequently, no way could be seen out of the difficulties under which the prisoners suffered. It might reasonably be expected that if any favors were shown by congress to the troops, it would be to the English who had hitherto been treated better than the Germans, a fact of which the latter were well aware. Their difficulties were furthermore increased by the repeated disputes between the prisoners and the Americans by whom they were guarded. Each party vied in irritating the other, the former being instigated by hatred towards those who endeavored to assume the appearance of soldiers, a course which only made them ridiculous as they were anything but soldiers, and the latter by arrogance and a desire of being revenged upon those whom they knew to be their superiors in military matters. These quarrels, moreover, occurred almost daily, notwithstanding the strictest orders of the commanders that their men not only should hold no intercourse with the Americans, but should not even speak to them. These orders were issued so that there might not be the slightest pretext for a quarrel. In consequence of General Burgoyne's request, some of the English officers had been already exchanged, but none of the Germans.

General Riedesel, accordingly, thought it best at this time to appeal to General Howe. He, therefore, wrote to him as follows :

“CAMBRIDGE, *January 7, 1778.*

“Your excellency will permit me to solicit your protection and assistance on behalf of the German officers who were captured during the last campaign. In consequence of a request on the part of General Burgoyne, General Gates has exchanged a number of British officers at Albany; but, on being asked to exchange, also, a corresponding number of German officers, he answered that he could not agree to an exchange of German troops without special orders from congress. This answer gives to a rumor, now current in this province, the appearance of truth, that congress has resolved to exchange none of the German officers who were captured. Such a resolution, if true, will make our situation a sad and humiliating one, especially since we are thus deprived of the same advantages which have been accorded the other troops, and which are customary in war among those serving the same cause, the same master and with the same diligence, which latter fact has been publicly declared by General Burgoyne.

“Perfectly convinced of your justice and fairness, I take the liberty of addressing you and of praying you, that, as the commander in chief of the army in America, you will exert your influence in our behalf to bring about an exchange of captured German officers with General Washington, equal in amount to the number of English officers who were exchanged by General Gates. I have the honor of inclosing a list of the German officers captured during the last campaign, and would recommend to your especial protection Lieutenant Colonel Specht, Captain Fricke, Captain Geisau, Lieutenant Gebhardt, Lieutenant Brea and Captain O'Connell, my adjutant.

“I remain, etc.,

“RIEDESEL, Major General.”

General Riedesel took special pains to preserve his right of jurisdiction over his troops, and thus avoid giving any cause to the Americans for taking it from him. For this purpose the preservation of discipline was particularly necessary; but this was by no means an easy matter under existing circumstances. Owing to want of employment, the soldiers were more than ever inclined to insubordination. For the purpose of correcting this state of things, the first thing the German general did was to detach from each regiment, a guard, consisting of one non-commissioned officer and sixteen privates, under the command of a lieutenant. It was their express duty to see that quiet and order were observed. A staff officer, as officer of the day, had these guards under his supervision. Everything had to be reported to him. He was empowered to settle difficulties between the soldiers and provincials on the spot. General Riedesel, himself, drew up the necessary instructions, and a severe penalty was inflicted upon those who endeavored to thwart them.

These prudent measures soon produced good results. In the first place difficulties were thus nipped in the bud, and had, therefore, no chance to grow larger; and, secondly, the provincials saw that nothing which the prisoners did deserving punishment, was overlooked. The benefit, also, arising from the guard system was soon seen in the men being easier kept together, and desertions becoming less frequent. The better, also, to give his men employment and thus keep up discipline, Riedesel obliged them to drill every day in divisions, when the weather allowed it. Not having any arms, they could only go through the evolutions of marching; but this, besides giving employment to the men, kept them proficient in this kind of drill.

All officers, and those who bore the rank of officers, were permitted to retain their side arms. General Heath even directed, in an order issued January 7th, that these arms should be constantly carried whenever the officers went beyond the outposts. This was done to obviate the necessity of their show-

ing their passes to the provincials who otherwise were required to insist upon seeing all passes.

On Winter hill it was not as quiet as on Prospect hill. At the former place excesses grew more and more frequent. The Americans did not send those of the English whom they arrested, back to their quarters, as was their custom with the Germans, but dragged them either to the guard house or the guard ships. The following instance will serve to show the extent to which mutual ill feeling had grown :

On the 8th of January, the American Colonel Hawley, with his men, was on guard behind the barracks on Prospect hill. In front of one of the barracks stood eight English soldiers belonging to the 9th Regiment. They were engaged in conversation, when suddenly the above mentioned colonel ran in among them with a drawn dagger like a maniac, and in an instant mortally wounded two of the group. The cause, if any, that led him to commit this outrageous act has ever remained a secret. The indignation and bitter feeling of the English toward their jailors were increased by this event to the highest pitch ; and General Burgoyne, in an energetic letter, demanded of General Heath the arrest of Colonel Hawley and a strict investigation.

Colonel Hawley was publicly tried on the 20th of January, in the meeting house at Cambridge. Brigadier General Glover presided. All the English and German generals, also many officers of both sides, and a great number of civilians, were present. General Burgoyne, personally appearing as plaintiff, made the complaint in a strong and masterly speech which gained him the admiration of all present. With the close of this speech, the proceedings terminated for the day. On the 1st of February, Colonel Hawley was again arraigned before the same tribunal. The room was filled, and many witnesses were present, forty of whom were examined. The investigation lasted for twenty sessions, and occupied an entire month. The Americans themselves, considered Colonel Hawley lost ; but