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JOHN ALLAN'S INVASION
OF THE ST. JOHN RIVER.

(29.)

John Allan, of whose doings on the river St. John in the summer of the year 1777 we are about to speak, was born at Edinburgh, Scotland, and when only four years of age came with his father to Halifax at the time that city was founded by Cornwallis. He was consequently about thirty years of age when the Revolutionary war began. He relied upon his personal influence and acquaintance with the Indians to bring them over to the side of the Americans. His estimate of Indian character is not particularly flattering. He says, "The Indians are generally actuated according to the importance or influence any one has who lives among them. They are credulous to a degree, will listen to every report, and generally believe it, and think everything true that is told them." At the same time, he says, "They think among themselves it is a great qualification to use deception. . . . and employ every art to gain their ends. Where they perceive an opportunity to get something they will exert every faculty to obtain it." Allan used all his art to subvert the Micmacs, but they were too politic to commit themselves and we must admit that in their answer to his solicitations they had the best of it: "We do not comprehend," they said, "what all this quarrelling is about. How comes it that Old England and New England should quarrel and come to blows? The father and son to fight is terrible! Old France and Canada did not do so; we cannot think of fighting ourselves till we know who is right and who is wrong."

In the spring of 1777 Allan resolved to try his personal influence among the malisets in order to remove if possible the favorable disposition towards the English by Col. Goold's visit. Col. Goold, it may be observed, spent several weeks on the river in the early part of May, 1777, during which he succeeded in pacifying the Indians and securing the submission of the Manguerville settlers who, with the exception of three who fled to the States, took the oath of allegiance to the British crown.

On the 29th of May word was brought to Allan that Col. Goold had returned to Halifax. He accordingly left Machias the day following with four whale boats and four canoes and a party of forty-three men. The next day they arrived at the encampment of the Passamaquoddy where they were well received and proceeded onward reinforced by about a dozen more canoes manned by Indians. On the evening of June 1st they arrived at Musquash Cove, where they planned to surprise the settlers at Portland Point. Accordingly Capt. West and sixteen men started in the night for Manawagonish Cove, arriving there early the next morning. (This cove is about four miles to the west of St. John harbor.) They marched nearly three miles through the woods to South Bay above the falls crossing from thence in bark canoes to the east side of the river near what is now Indian town. Proceeding on through scrubby woods and over rough limestone rocks they arrived at Portland Point undiscovered and made prisoners of William Hazen and James White. Leaving a strong guard at the mouth of the river under Capt. West, the remainder of the party proceeded up the river. Allan claims that the majority of the settlers despite their submission to British authority were still favorable to the Americans. Some, however, "were great zealots for Britain," and among them one Lewis Mitchell was particularly obnoxious, having been instrumental in bringing Col. Goold to the river. Gervis says one of the old Sunbury magistrates was another loyal British subject, and is referred to by Allan as one of those who informed the Nova Scotia government of his arrival on the St. John. Lewis Mitchell was an active and zealous partizan, and Allan dreaded his influence because of his being "of a insinuating turn, particularly among the French and Indians." The Americans succeeded in surprising and capturing Mitchell at his house above Grimrose in much the same manner they had previously surprised and taken Hazen and White. Three weeks afterwards he effected his escape, a circumstance regarded by Allan as

very unfortunate, and liable to be "of the worst consequence." His fears were more than verified as we shall shortly see.

On the 5th day of June the party arrived at Aukpaque where forty or fifty Indians arrayed in their war paint and feathers fired a *feu de joie* and received them with much ceremony. What followed in the course of the next few weeks bears out the truth of Allan's statement quoted at the beginning of this article, viz: that the Indians were generally actuated according to the importance and influence of anyone who lived among them. At first he found several were vastly fond of Col. Goold and seemed undetermined what to do. The inclinations of the two head chiefs were diverse. Ambrose St. Aubin favored the Americans, Governor Pierre inclined the other way. Allan, however, knowing well the weak points of the Indian character, flattered them, appealed to their capacity promising presents and supplies from the trading post he was about to establish, recalled the days when they regarded the French as their brothers affirming he had come to do them justice with the same authority Monsieur Boisherbert had exercised in the French time. He was formally admitted into their tribe and as they had then no resident priest at their village the priest's house adjoining the chapel was placed at his disposal. There followed frequent formal conferences with the usual harangues, exchange of wampun belts, and other ceremonies, in all of which the American agent appeared to advantage. The several chiefs made quite a grand appearance at these conferences: Ambrose St. Aubin, for example, was attired in blue Persian silk coat, embroidered crimson silk waistcoat, scarlet knit breeches and gold laced hat with white cocade. Allan during the intervals between the formal conferences occupied himself in visiting the different wigwams exercising his powers of persuasion upon the Indians individually. Messengers were dispatched up the river to invite the attendance of delegates from Meductic and Madawaska, and they promptly responded especially as it became known that Allan had a considerable quantity of supplies and presents at his disposal.

The journal kept by the party during the expedition is printed in Kidder's military operations in Eastern Maine and Nova Scotia during the Revolution. It affords occasional glimpses of the general situation of affairs on the St. John river at the time and gives us some further insight into the customs and manners of the Indians. Allan describes the funeral of an Indian girl. The ceremony was a solemn yet simple one. The body was borne into the chapel, the bell tolling the while; after a short prayer they sang funeral hymns, that done some of the chiefs bore the coffin to the grave where there was another prayer followed by a funeral hymn. The coffin was then deposited in the grave and a handful of earth cast upon it by the relatives and friends of her sex. Immediately afterwards the family wigwam was struck and removed into the thickest part of the village that the parents might the better be consoled for the loss of their child.

Allan says that on the Sundays he was at Aukpaque a number of Frenchmen came to worship at the Indian chapel and that he and his prisoners Messrs Hazen and White also attended. The bell of the chapel is probably the very same now in the chapel at the Indian village at Fredericton, which is inscribed with the *fleur de lis* of France. Allan wrote to Boston that he needed an abundance of things sent him as he had been forced to be very lavish in his dealings with the Indians. Delegates arrived from the Meductic village and on the 20th of June three birch canoes arrived from Madawaska with seven chiefs and captains one of whom had lately assumed the name of Washington. At the next conference an agreement was made that a truck house should be established by the Americans on the river St. John and good prices were promised for furs and peltry.

Thus far fortune had smiled upon the undertaking and all had gone swimmingly with John Allan but he was now about to undergo a very different kind of experience.

Information had already been sent to Halifax by Gervis Say and other Loyalists respecting Allan's expedition and Lewis Mitchell after his escape is said to have proceeded post haste to Fort Cumberland. Sir George Collier immediately ordered the warship *Mermaid* and the sloops *Valure* and *Hope* to proceed to St. John where shortly after their arrival they were joined by a detachment from the garrison at Fort Cumberland under Major Studholme accompanied by Col. Michael Francklin the lately appointed superintendent of Indian affairs.

Allan had left Captain West and sixty men to defend the river. On the 30th June the English landed about 120 men at Manawagonish cove opposite the house of Mr. Samuel Peabody. They marched thence through the woods about two miles and a half and after a sharp battle near the falls in which several were killed on both sides the Yankees beat a hasty retreat. Finding the British in hot pursuit Capt. West and his men ascended the Oromocto crossing thence to the head of the Magaguadavie which they descended to Passamaquoddy and so got back

to Machias. They had little or no provisions with them and endured almost intolerable hardships on their way.

When tidings of this disaster reached Aukpaque all was consternation. Allan says in his journal the head chief came to him and begged he would write a letter to the commander of the British forces it being the desire of the Indians at Aukpaque to act in conjunction with the deputies from "Metawashcaugh" and Meductic. Allan now exercised all his diplomacy to prevent the savages from submitting to the English and not without effect. Pierre Tomah and several others were disposed to listen to the overtures of Michael Francklin but Ambrose St. Aubin and the majority were not so disposed. Tomah went on board the British sloop of war, which came up the river, and had an interview with Francklin. Evidently he was not indisposed to come to terms but the efforts of Allan seconded by Ambrose St. Aubin prevented his carrying his tribe with him. Finding that the British would in all probability follow him up the river, Allan persuaded the majority of the Indians to abandon their settlements and share his fortunes. He assured them this was but a temporary measure and that the Americans would shortly regain possession of the river. It certainly was not through lack of exertion on his part that they failed to do so.

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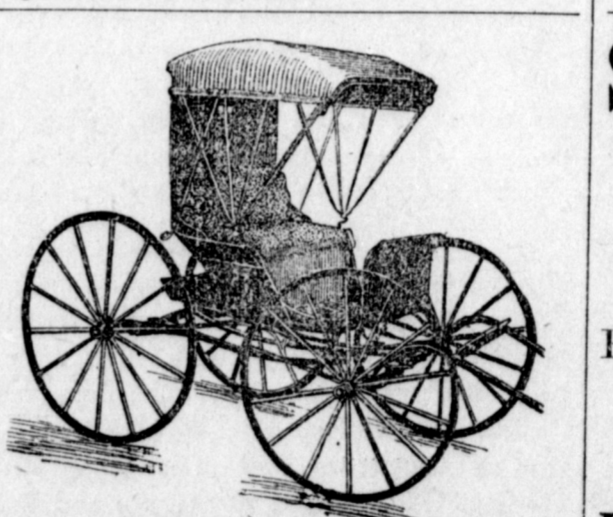
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