

FORT PARIS AND THE GETMANS

An interesting chapter of the early history of Stone Arabia is opened with an extract from the minutes of the Tryon county committee, dated Dec. 19, 1776: "Resolved, That the Rangers of Capt. Christian Getman's company stationed at Stone Arabia shall in the time of their leisure, when and which of them are not employed in ranging, cut timber for building a certain fort in the said place, under the sole direction and command of Isaac Paris, Esq., Jno. Eisenbold, Sec."

The Rangers, whose duty was to range the forests, were organized under the act of provincial congress, July 23, 1776, when it was "Resolved, That there be raised in the county of Tryon to be divided into three companies each to consist of one captain, two lieutenants, three sergeants, three corporals and fifty-eight privates. One of these companies was known as the Stone Arabia Rangers and was under the command of Capt. Christian Getman, and Lieutenants James Billington and Jacob Sammons.

Christian Getman was a member of one of the early families to settle in Stone Arabia. When the first Getman came to America is not definitely known but they probably were among the Palatines who came in the year 1710.

In the State Library at Albany is a photostat of a list of Palatine immigrants into England in the year 1709, being a list of those who arrived at St. Catherine's the 11th of June, 1709. Among the names is a Casper Getman, aged 36 yrs., his wife; sons aged 16-14-8-5; and daughters aged 6-5-2. They are registered as Lutherans. Whether this entire family came to America has not yet been learned but I believe that perhaps the eldest son may have come because of this record just brought to light—a record of the naturalization of a group of men for American citizenship in Albany October 11, 1715, and among the group was Frederick Getman. If this oldest son of Casper Getman was 16 years of age in 1709, his birth must have occurred in 1693, and he would therefore be twenty-two years of age in 1715. I am now endeavoring to find where he lived when naturalized and so perhaps can find the rest of the family.

The first record that we have of our family is of a Frederick Getman who settled at Stone Arabia and who married Mary Bierman, the daughter of John Bierman, his partner. The Biermans were patentees of Burnettsfield Patent in 1725. It is said that Frederick Getman settled at Stone Arabia in 1720 and purchased lots Nos. 62, 64, 66, and 68 in the Stone Arabia Patent from Hendrick Six, with Johannes Bierman, later buying Bierman's interests so that he owned 700 acres in a body, and had also some desirable possessions, in Burnettsfield.

Frederick and Mary Bierman Getman had 6 children, George, John, Frederick, Christian, Mary and Eve. George was born at Stone Arabia, May 1, 1723, and may have been the eldest. He married Udelia Shoemaker and they had four sons and 1 daughter. Christian was born Mar. 6, 1733, and married Ann Eve Zimmerman. They had 8 children, and he is the Capt. of the Rangers referred to above. Frederick born 1736 married Barbara Frank, and John married Anna Maria Merckels. All of these sons, with the exception of John, served during the American Revolution, and some of the sons served in the Colonial Wars. Mrs. Hatch says that Frederick Getman and his wife are buried in the Church yard at Stone Arabia, but that the graves are unmarked. Many of the others are buried in the graveyard on the Getman homestead near Ephratah.

Fort Paris, which Capt. Christian Getman's Rangers helped to build, stood on a summit of ground said to be 1,000 ft. above sea level, half a mile to the north of the Stone Arabia churches and between 3 and 4 miles to the northeast of Fort Plain. It was a palisade enclosing strong block houses and was large enough to accommodate a garrison of two or three hundred men. It was begun in December, 1776, and completed in the Spring of 1777, taking its name from Col. Isaac Paris, a merchant of prominence, who came to Stone Arabia from Alsace in 1737. It was built of solid hewn timber and was two stories high with the upper story projecting over the lower on all sides. This was considered a very important post, being usually manned by a company or two of Rangers. Col. Klock and Lieut. Col. Wagner had much to do with its command.

In the Fall and Winter of 1779, it became the headquarters of Col. Frederick Fisher, who commanded this and its adjacent military posts. In December of that year a number of three months militia men were dispersed on account of the lateness of the season and the improbability of immediate invasion. In the Spring of 1780 the supervisors of the county authorized a ferry over the Mohawk at John Walrad's, and recommended the said John Walrad to Governor Clinton for a license. This was done because it was highly necessary to preserve communication between Forts Plank and Paris.

On June 24, 1780, General Robert

Van Rensselaer of the 2d Brigade of Albany militia was ordered to Fort Paris where Col. Klock was stationed with the 2d Regt. of Tryon county Militia. Gen. Van Rensselaer writes Gov. Clinton at length of the conditions there saying among other things: "I have appointed persons to make enquiry what quantity of flour and beef can be collected, but much fear it will be far short of your expectation. Could your excellency see the distressed situation of this country, you'd sincerely feel for its distressed inhabitants, as every little fort is crowded with block houses, replete with inhabitants and their anxiety is much increased through fear that some of the troops will be called from this county, which has already too few by the accounts of the field officers. An Indian went down to Albany last night from Fort Schuyler, who says the enemy are coming in force against that garrison. Some of the enemy's Indians burnt the empty houses at Snyder's Bush yesterday; it is about 18 miles distant from this place; and they are frequently discovered in small parties." Soon after, Gen. Van Rensselaer left the fort to assist the Canajoharie men at Fort Schuyler.

In September, 1780, Col. John Brown had 276 men under his command at Fort Paris, and in October of that same year Sir John Johnson with his forces raided the valley, crossing the river at Sprakers on the

morning of the 19th, with a large force of men to attack Fort Paris. Col. Brown a very brave man, left his little fortress and led his men to attack the foe, meeting them in battle nearly two-thirds of the way to the river. Overpowered by numbers he fell, and his blood with that of more than 40 of his brave followers, dyed the fertile fields of Stone Arabia. He was scalped and stripped of his clothing for it was impossible for his men to bear off his body at the time, for they had to retreat at once, seeking safety in the Fort if they were able to reach it or in the forest. It is said that George Getman (son of the pioneer) fired the first shot in the Battle of Stone Arabia. Simms tells that as he, Getman, was fleeing from the battlefield, he overtook a young Yankee soldier, who took hold of his bayonet belt, must assisting him but retarding his own flight. After proceeding in this manner awhile, the belt broke and the lad fell behind, soon to be tomahawked and scalped. Getman passed east through a gate of the fence, having to stoop to go under the upper bar, and as he stooped he heard a bullet strike the board over his head. He was not pursued any further, and in passing a fallen tree in a little grove, he heard a voice saying, "Come here, brother!" Concealed under this tree he found Jacob Snell a brother militiaman, with a wounded shoulder. They both adjusted their gun-locks, and soon after saw an Indian step upon a stump, and while they had a good aim upon him, did not know how near other savages might be and so did not dare fire. George Getman took off his hat and was in the act of examining Snell's wound, when a hawk flew down and struck its talons into his bald scalp causing the blood to flow freely. Not seeing the hawk he thought an Indian had struck him, but turning around and seeing no Indian, he did not know what it was until his companion told him. Getman exclaimed: "Blitz, that's a warning," and they soon made their way up a ravine in safety to Fort Paris.

As soon as it was safe to do so, the body of Col. Brown was removed from the field and later buried in the church yard where an imposing monument marks his grave. The bodies of his men who had fallen were placed on a sled, although there was no snow on the ground, and drawn to an open trench near Fort Paris, where they were buried side by side in the clothes in which they had fallen.

Fort Paris was taken down early in the nineteenth century, its timbers being used in the construction of buildings now standing in that locality. This small fort has served its purpose and served it well, through many thrilling scenes. Its walls had offered protection for the terrified settlers of the neighborhood. Brave men had commanded there, brave men had served there, and brave men had gone forth to death from this frontier post. To the people of Stone Arabia, Fort Paris, small though it was, furnished the only barrier between them and the forces of the King and the tomahawk of the savage. The site of the Fort has been marked with a State Marker and the Battlefield of Stone Arabia with a large boulder.

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