

A SECOND LOOK at the Battle of Lake George September 8, 1755

By Edward J. Dodge

Earlier I wrote about the September 8, 1755 Battle of Lake George. (See: *The Battle of Lake George* in the Spring 2005 newsletter). At that time numerous sources were used with Samuel Blodgett's *Prospective Plan of The Battle of Lake George* being the article's primary source. Since that time, other primary material concerning the battle has come to my attention. That is the published journal and letters of Lieutenant Colonel Seth Pomeroy. The information contained in those writings confirms and adds to what I had written previously in 2005 as well as the contents of the article *Major General Seth Pomeroy - A Brief Biography* published in the Fall 2007 newsletter.

In Lieutenant Colonel Pomeroy's journal and letters, he indicates that the British Provincial Troops arrived at Lake George at about 4PM, Thursday, 28 August 1755 with the strength of 2000 men. Among them was Colonel Ephraim Williams' Massachusetts Regiment in which he served as one of its company commanders. (See: *Ephraim Williams* in the Fall 2004 newsletter).

Early in the morning of September 8th, Seth wrote to his wife indicating, among other things, that he missed her and that he was in good health. He went on to relate to her some of the recent news pertaining to the conduct of the expedition so far. There were 2000 men at the lake (the south end of Lake George). They had lost some men due to illness brought on by cold weather, but that number was few. A friend of theirs was still at the Carrying Place being quite ill and another friend had died. Three of their Indians, who had been up towards Crown Point, had the day before brought word of seeing evidence that a considerable number of the enemy

were traveling south along Wood Creek. Since it was felt that enemy force might attack their wagons coming up to the lake from the Carrying Place on the Hudson River a number of messengers (first one man and later two others plus three Indians) were sent to the Carrying Place with that intelligence. Seth went on to state that earlier that morning (the 8th), they had received word that the wagons had been fired on, but no harm had been done. The balance of the letter advised her that they felt they would be successful with the expedition and that he advised her to train the children in the ways of religion and virtue and to extent his best to those they knew.

In Seth's journal entry of early Monday, September 8, 1755, he stated, in view of the information they had received on the 7th, that a large body of men was traveling south near Wood Creek (east of the lake and separated from the lake by a mountain), approximately 1200 men, 200 of them allies from the Six Nations, had been sent south on the military road toward "The Carrying Place" (also known as Fort Edward, Fort Lyman, Lydius Trading House or Fort Lydius). This movement of their troops was due to some speculation that the Enemy was going to attack their wagon train loaded with stores for the camp at Lake George or possibly Fort Edward which was only partially constructed and lightly defended and that they either needed additional protection or reinforcement.

These troops had gone about three miles south along the military road when they were ambushed by the French force and their Indian allies.

Quoting from Seth's journal: "The front of the column fought bravely, but many of the men in the rear fled. Others remained and fought a very handsome

retreat by firing, retreating a little and then rising and giving the enemy a brisk fire. This continued until they were within of a mile of the camp. At that point the troops gave a last volley killing great numbers of them - seen to drop like pigeons and stopping the French momentarily. Some 300 men under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Cole of Rhode Island were sent out to assist the retreating troops."

The French drove on with courage, with the French Regulars about six abreast and came within 20 rods of the British camp. The French then turned to their left and faced the British camp after taking shelter behind trees, logs and other places where they could hide and fire from. The troops in the British camp, when their first wounded started to arrive, realized they had only a short period of time before they would also be attacked. They then rapidly set up a hasty defense line with 3 or 4 field pieces in a relatively safe position covering the approach along the military road. Other field pieces were positioned toward the west part of the camp. Lieutenant Colonel Pomeroy placed himself with his troops and some of Colonel Timothy Ruggle's Regiment in a defensive line toward the west of the camp. The main battle, according to Colonel Pomeroy, started in earnest between 11 o'clock AM and noon and continued until 5 PM.

The French General, Baron de Dieskau, was wounded and about 30 of his men were taken prisoner. His Aide De Camp was also taken prisoner. There were a considerable number of French dead. The French General advised his captors that the greater part of his officers were killed and that his army or force was broken. Dieskau did not know the number of dead, but by body count and questioning the prisoners, it was

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determined that number was not less than 4 or 500 men.

On Tuesday, September 9th, the Provincials buried the dead in camp and reinforced their position. Seth gave no indication of the number of dead in camp.

Seth's journal entry for Wednesday, September 10th, indicates the day was fair and hot. That day, he went out with 400 men to bury the dead killed at the ambush site and along the military road on the 8th. They buried 136 men in what he termed "A most melancholy piece of business." The body of Colonel Williams their Regimental Commander was found and buried. Seth makes no mention of King Hendrick's body being found. That day, he also learned that his brother Daniel had been killed and scalped. The burial/work party with Colonel Pomeroy collected 2 or 3 wagons full of French stores, guns, blankets and hatches. These spoils of war, they brought back to camp.

Seth's journal reflects that on Thursday, September 11th, more men were sent out to pick up the stores and to bury any other bodies that could be found. That day they buried four more of their own men and found a great number of French bodies that had been hidden and buried. He stated further that they had brought back to camp a wounded man who had been setting where they found him (he didn't say where) since September 8th. That man had the back of his skull cut off and his brain exposed. Seth did not think the man would live.

On September 9th, Colonel Pomeroy wrote to Colonel Israel Williams (Colonel Ephraim Williams cousin and executor of his estate) advising him of the events of the 8th. As of the 9th, Colonel Seth Pomeroy was the only surviving field grade officer of Ephraim Williams' regiment.

Seth's letter to Israel Williams further indicates: that the French had 4000 men at Crown Point and the immediate French column had 1800 men, the French had copies of the plans for the British provincial (William Johnson's) operation, maps of Fort Edward, a lay out of the camp at Lake George, as well as details of the Provincial's march from Fort Edward to Lake George. Colonel Pomeroy ends this letter with the hope that the prayers of God's people will sustain and support them in their attack on Crown Point.

On September 11th, the Seth wrote his sister-in-law Rachel Pomeroy, wife of Daniel, to inform her of Daniel's death. He was very straight forward; he told her that Daniel had been killed by a fatal shot through the middle of his head. He did not tell her that Daniel had been scalped. He wrote further that they had buried 136 men and had since buried 20 more. He closed with the hope that God's blessings would be with her and her children and indicated the family would help in all ways possible.

Colonel Ephraim Williams' Regiment sustained 50 dead, 21 wounded and no missing as a result of the battle(s) of the 8th of September. They brought in 27 French, 20 were wounded. Their equipment loss was low: 12 blanket haversacks, 11 pumpkins (probably trumplings - used to distribute the weight of a haversack load), 5 hatches, 2 waistcoats, 2 coats, 2 shoes, 2 hats, 2 caps, and one knife. No firearms were listed.

Lieutenant Colonel Pomeroy was promoted to full Colonel and took command of the regiment, September 9, 1755. ■

REFERENCE: "Journal and Papers of Seth Pomeroy" as published by The Society of Colonial Wars in the State of New York, 1926.