

**August 15, 1776**  
*The Brigade Dispatch*  
*A Publication of the Brigade of the American Revolution*  
Vol. 25, No. 3 (Autumn 1995), 12-13

Philip D. Weaver

The following account takes place on the western edge of civilization. In New-York, a scouting party of regulars from the 3rd New Jersey Regiment (then known as the "Jersey Greys"), returning to Fort Schuyler (Stanwix) from Oswego, was attacked by a party of Messagauga Indians.

Scenario writers should note the lack of light bobs, dragoons, or ranger/rifle types on the scout. They only had one local guide and no officers! In fact, the action included fewer than twenty men combined, and could easily be incorporated into a larger tactical demonstration or stand on its own as a small unit action. The two sergeants are clearly the heroes in this story - Aitkins' cry for his men to use their bayonets and Younglove for surviving captivity.

It is these two acts of heroism that make it all so fascinating. Near death, Aitkins knew the men of this first establishment regiment not only had bayonets, but could use them for something besides a camp kitchen utensil – even against Indians. Secondly, Younglove was captured in the Mohawk Valley, but was returned to his regiment at Fort Ticonderoga, where it had been sent a month earlier. Either British intelligence was superb or their enemy's movements were not very secret.

Details of the attack can be found in the diaries of 3rd New Jersey officers Captain Joseph Bloomfield and 2nd Lieutenant Ebenezer Elmer, and a letter from their colonel, Elias Dayton, to Major General Philip Schuyler. The account book for Captain Thomas Patterson's company (where Younglove enlisted, per regimental orders quoted in Elmer's diary) also offered further details.

Lt. Elmer's narrative is by far the most elaborate, so it is used here as the body of the story. The other sources, however, clarify many points which have been inserted in parenthesis.

"Friday, August 16th, 1776

"...Serjeant (-Major Isaiah) Younglove, with his party on the scout, were attacked about six miles this side of Oswego on their return from thence by about 10 (Messagauga) Indians. The Indians fired upon them, but their guns were so wet they could get none of them off except one, which did no execution.

"A ball took Sergeant Aitkins (also spelled Ahen or Aaiken), of Capt. Potter's company, in the body, upon which he fell, crying out, "I am a dead man, but do not fly, if your guns will not go off, rush them with your bayonets."

"After which Mr. Ball, their guide, went down the hill and called out for others to follow him, and they would then endeavor to make a stand. Accordingly, two of the men did (a man named Freeman, was wounded), but Serjeant Younglove and one other (Private James McGennis) besides the Serjeant wounded, would not.

"After these three (Ball's party) had got down the hill, they heard two guns go off. They then attempted to get (back) to the others, but found the Indians persuing them; were therefore obliged to make the best of their way off, leaving the others behind, dead or alive they could not tell.

"They received several shots, but none as to cripple them. After they left there, they fell in with two friendly Indians of the Onondago Tribe, who conducted them safely down to Fort Schuyler."

A messenger from Fort Schuyler reported to Lt. Elmer on August 25 that "the private left among the Indians with Serjeants Younglove and Aitkins had escaped with a slight wound,

running off and hiding till they had all gone off.... He is not able to determine whether the Serjeants were killed or taken prisoner." Elmer later learned that they "were wounded and taken prisoners to Oswego, where a Mohawk Indian, being one of their young warriors, tomahawked their brains out."

This last bit of information was at least partially incorrect. On November 17 Captain Bloomfield noted that Serjeant Major Younglove, paroled by Guy Carleton, returned to the regiment, at Fort Ticonderoga, under a flag of truce. According to his company's book, Younglove received three months' back pay and all expense monies due him. He apparently returned home or was unable to serve, because Sergeant Wilkinson, of Captain Dickenson's

company, was named regimental sergeant major six days later.

#### References

Elmer, Ebenezer, "Journal Kept during an Expedition to Canada in 1776," Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, 2 (1846) p. 95-146; 2 (1847) p. 150-194; 3 (1848) p. 21-56, 90-102.

Force, Peter, ed., American Archives, 5th series, vol. 1, Washington, DC, 1837-1853, p. 1033-1034, Dayton to Schuyler, August 15, 1775.

Lender, Mark E. and Martin, James K., ed., Citizen Soldier. The Revolutionary War Journal of Joseph Bloomfield (Newark, N.J., New Jersey Historical Society, 1982).

Pension application of Adoniram Parrot (S.43776), (National Archives Microfilm Publication M804), Records of the Veterans Administration; Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land-Warrant Application Files, Record Group 15; National Archives and Records Administration-Northeast Region (Pittsfield). Parrot enlisted in "the Jersey Greys commanded by Elias Dayton."

3rd New Jersey Continental Regiment Account Book, 1776 - 1778, Captain Thomas Patterson's Company. Manuscript #216, New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, NJ.

\*\*\*\*\*