

# IN DEFENSE OF THE FACTS

## AN ONGOING SEARCH

### FOR

### FORT PLANK



Four years have now passed since the publication of "The Bloodied Mohawk" and a plethora of new data has been collected. All reviews of the tome, with the exception of one, have been positive. However, this [one negative review](#) has led the author to critically review his own work, and after careful consideration the author has found a need to arise "In Defense of the Facts" in "An Ongoing Search For Fort Plank".

Over the succeeding 225+ years since its construction in 1778, Revolutionary War historians have stated [multiple locations for Fort Plank](#). William W. Campbell (1806-1881) is the first known non-contemporary to have stated a location for Fort Plank: <sup>(1)</sup>

*Sir John Johnson settled at Fox's Mills. about eight miles above Fort Plank, (or as it now called Fort Plain,) and two miles below the upper Mohawk castle.*

Campbell was later quoted by Colonel William L. Stone (1792-1844); who, when writing his Life of Brant , employed Thomas Sammons, <sup>(2)</sup> a Tryon County militiaman who had taken part in the defense of Fort Plank on August 2, 1780 to review the truth and veracity of William W. Campbell's, The Annals of Tryon County . <sup>(3)</sup> And thus the controversy began.

It seems quite remarkable that Stone not only copied Campbell's statement concerning the location of Fort Plank, but universally accepted it as true, despite his independent review of the facts. One must note, with curiosity, that these great authors wrote and published their histories during a period when many of the veterans who had served within Forts Plank and Plain, were yet alive, and remarkably knowledgeable about the topography and posts in question.

Campbell's distance estimates are impossible. Two miles "below" [downriver] the upper Mohawk castle site would place Fox's Mills on the river flats at present-day Mindenville, near the site of Fort Windecker. Eight miles farther downriver would place the site of Fort Plank at or near the modern village of Canajoharie. The problem is, we know from several contemporary sources where the Battle of Klock's Field was fought, and that site was several miles east of where Campbell places it. The equally well-identified site of "Fox's Mills" near the mouth of the Caroga Creek was two and one-third miles southeast of the actual Klock's Field battle site, and neither of the traditionally identified sites for Fort Plain and Fort Plank are even close to eight miles from those locations. In short, external data reveals Campbell's locations in the quoted passage to be totally inaccurate and useless.

The highlighted part of the statement, however, is absolutely factual. By 1831, when Campbell wrote this, **Fort Plank** had been dismantled and nearly forgotten for nearly

half a century. The nearest contemporary *community* that his readers could readily identify was **Fort Plain**. Note Campbell's use of the modifier *now* – “*as it is now* [ie in 1831] *called Fort Plain*.” In 1831 the village that we know as Fort Plain was just being established due to the recently completed Erie Canal. In fact when Annals of Tryon County was published Fort Plain wouldn't even be incorporated as a village for another year. The “town” (as that term was once loosely used) that Campbell thought of as “Fort Plain” was north of the current village limits on what is now called “Sand Hill”. The U.S. post office and several merchants were located there in 1831 – just two miles east of the traditional location of Fort Plank. Even today the Paris Road site of Fort Plank has a Fort Plain postal address. Given this revelation, I think it is *very possible* that this passage may not have even be suggesting that Fort Plank and Fort Plain was actually the same fort; rather that Fort Plank was located within the dispersed farming community known informally in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as Fort Plain.

All of the other stuff that Johnson goes on about is not material to the question of the identities of Fort Plain and Fort Plank - “red herring” arguments.

For instance, Thomas Sammons was undoubtedly a wonderful upstanding man, but appealing to his authority is baseless as we have no evidence of his beliefs concerning the identity of Fort Plank and Fort Plain - at least not from Stone's book. Sammons actually did leave a narrative account of the August 2<sup>nd</sup> raid that speaks of Fort Plain and Fort Plank as two separate forts, but he was not likely to be “picking the nits” from Campbell's manuscript. Even if he did identify such picayune mistakes there is a good chance that Campbell did not take every bit of Sammon's advice. How could we know? That is why good historians steer clear of negative evidence.

Nor can we say with certainty that Stone made “an independent review of the facts” regarding Fort Plank and Fort Plain. His main concern was exonerating the memory of Joseph Brant and it is not likely that he spent a great deal of time agonizing over irrelevant matters. None of these early authors were focused on logistical details. They were far more interested in the larger story of what they perceived as good and evil: Where were the battles fought? Who was a “good guy” vs. “bad guy”? What atrocities were committed by the “bad guys”? Who was martyred as a “good guy” in the cause of “freedom”? -W.L.

Historians whose **personal** work followed Campbell's and Stone's, have since offered up a host of locations for Forts Plank, Plain, and Rensselaer.

Strange word choice, but perhaps some folks are emotionally attached to their historical research as a *personal* thing. It certainly shouldn't be that subjective.

The mileage estimate from Fort Plain is variable depending on what part of the village one measures from (e.g. the center of the village is a mile farther away than the northern boundary of Fort Plain, and the southern corporate limits would add yet another mile to the estimated distance.) To a lesser degree the same can be said regarding the direction. It is somewhat dependent upon where in the village the bearing is taken from, and the direction controversy is compounded by the oft-made assumption that west is upriver and east is downriver – that simply isn't true at Fort Plain.

Concentrating on these unspecified distance estimates and cardinal directions, as Johnson has done, only serves to unnecessarily obfuscate and confuse the issue.

The first to openly criticize the writings of Campbell [1831] and Stone [1838] seems to have been Benjamin Lossing, writing in his 1851, Pictorial Field Book of the American Revolution : <sup>(4)</sup>

*There is considerable confusion in the accounts concerning Fort Plain, for which there is no necessity. There was a stockade about two miles southwest of Fort Plain, called Fort Clyde, in honor of Colonel Clyde, an officer in the Tryon County Militia; and another about the same distance northwest, called Fort Plank, or Blank, from the circumstances that it stood upon land owned by Frederic Blank. The latter and Fort Plain have been confounded. Mr. Stone erroneously considered them as one, and says, in his Life of Brant (ii, 95), "The principal work of defense, then called Fort Plank, and subsequently Fort Plain, was situated upon an elevated plain overlooking the valley, near the site of the village still retaining the name of the fortress." Other writers have regarded the block-house as the fort, when, in fact, it was only a part of the fortifications. The drawing here given is from one published in Stone's Life of Brant, with a description from the Fort Plain Journal of December 26th, 1837. Mr. Lipe considered it a correct view, except the lower story, which, it was his impression, was square instead of octagonal, and had four port-holes for heavy ordnance.*

The foregoing passage by Lossing served to fuel a controversy over the locations of these forts which continues unabated today.

There was no controversy for 150 years. Following the publication of Lossing's *Field Book* ..., all scholars who seriously examined this issue reached the conclusion that Lossing was correct. So to say that any difference of opinion *continued unabated* is factually incorrect. One hundred and fifty years later Mr. Johnson *resurrected* Stone's interpretation, initially without even acknowledging that subsequent scholars had all rejected it. -W.L.

After much public criticism and censorship, Campbell defended the accuracy of his work in a letter to the Honorable William W. Kent on January 1, 1849: <sup>(5)</sup>

*My Dear Sir:--Eighteen years ago the following - "Annals of Tryon County" were dedicated to your illustrious father. . . . To you, his son, my early professional instructor and my friend, I now present this new edition of a work, which, though it has but little intrinsic merit, either in its style and arrangement, possesses, perhaps, some interest, from the fact that it was the pioneer history of the border wars of our native State. For me it has a melancholy interest, because all the actors in the Revolutionary drama who were living at the time of its first appearance, in 1831, and from whose lips the personal narratives were gathered, have gone the way of all the living, and are now numbered with the dead. Of the then aged men and women scattered along the valley of the Mohawk and the head-waters of the Susquehanna, with whom it was my good fortune to sit down and listen to the stories of their trials and their triumphs, not one survives.*

*The materials were, at the time, collected . . . from the correspondence of the principal actors, and from the oral statements of those who survived to my day . . . and were in all essential particulars correct. When first published, the whole history of the border wars of New York scarcely made up a page in any then existing historical work. As this book was the first, and was prepared from materials in a great degree new, succeeding writers on the same subject drew largely upon it, and, in some instances, made extensive extracts without credit or reference. My first intention was, in presenting a new edition, to revise and alter, but upon reflection I determined to leave the work substantially in its original form. Since its first publication I have at various times examined many additional documents, and prepared articles which throw some new light upon portions of the work, and which tend to confirm its positions and statements. The original text will be left as it was, and these articles, even at the expense of some repetition, will be inserted in the Appendix . . . [of his, Campbell's, work]*

This speaks to Campbell's general satisfaction with his own book, but I fail to see how it has any bearing on the specific question of the identity of Fort Plain and/or Fort Plank. Are we to believe based on this quote that there are **no** inaccuracies in *Annals of Tryon County*? Besides, Campbell does not even address the location of Fort Plain, Fort Plank or Fort Rensselaer. Another "red herring".

In 1882, Jephtha R. Simms, in his The Frontiersman of New York , Volume One, pages 573-4, noted:

*Fort Plank.--This post established in 1776, was situated two miles and a half westward of Fort Plain, and one and a quarter miles in a direct line southerly from the Mohawk. Here, then, dwelt Frederick Plank, a whig, whose house was palisaded in a square inclosure with block-house corners. From its contiguity to the settlements of Dutchtown and Geissenburg, it served a safe retreat for a score or two of families. Capt. Joseph House, a militia officer who was living with Plank, usually commanded this post in the absence of field-officers. Col. Stone copying from Campbell's Annals, supposed Fort Plank and Fort Plain were synonymous names for the same fort. More or less troops were kept at this station through the war; and it is believed that for the first few years, it was regarded as of greater importance than Fort Plain, while the latter from 1780, became the head quarters of the commanding officer, for several military posts in its vicinity, Fort Plank included. **Facts from Lawrence Gros and Abram House, the last named residing, in 1846, on the old Plank farm, now owned by Adam Failing.***

Pretty specific location. "The old Plank farm" where Frederick Plank's home was located during the Revolutionary War and where his step-grandson Abram House lived in 1846; owned by Adam Failing in 1882. To my knowledge that description only fits one location. Lossing was referring to the southern 25 acres of original lot #2 in the Windecker Patent – the location I have referred to as the Paris Road site of Fort Plank.

In describing Fort Plain, Simms wrote: <sup>(6)</sup>

*Fort Plain was also established in 1776, but whether Col. Dayton or any continental officer was consulted in relation to it, is now unknown. Eye witnesses have assured me*

*that the structure was found too limited for the public need. It was situated on the next eminence westward of the cemetery hill, <sup>(7)</sup> and directly above a living spring; and was made by inclosing less than half an acre of ground with palisades, with bastions or block-houses in two diagonal corners, each constructed to as with cannon to command two sides of the inclosure . . . This church seen on the right, was one-third of a mile distant from the fort. . . .*

*Fort Plain Block-House.--This was erected in the fall of 1780 and spring of 1781, and was constructed of pine timber 8X14 inches square, dovetailed at the ends, and Thomas Morrel, of Schenectada, father of the late Judge Abram Morrel, of Johnstown, superintended its erection. It was octagonal in form, three stories in height, the second projecting five feet over the first, and the third five feet over the second, with port holes for cannon on the first floor, and for musketry on all its surfaces; with holes in the projecting floor for small arms, so as to fire down upon a closely approaching foe. The first story is said to have been 30 feet in diameter, the second 40 and the third 50, making it look top heavy for a gale of wind. It mounted several cannon for signal guns and defense--one of which was a twelve pounder--on the first floor; where was also an immense oven. . . . It stood upon a gentle elevation of several feet--which at the of an hundred years, the plow and the cultivator have nearly obliterated--and about 20 rods from the palisaded inclosure, which was constructed mainly by the farmers. The block-house was not palisaded, but a ditch or dry moat several feet deep and ten feet wide, extended around it, requiring a draw bridge to gain its entrance.*

*The land upon on which the defenses at Fort Plain were erected, was owned by Johannes Lipe in the Revolution, and afterward by his son David. The ownership is now in Seeber Lipe, a son of David. . . .*

Again a very specific and clear location. The hilltop adjacent to cemetery hill has been known locally as “Fort Hill” for many years. It is the hilltop that is currently owned jointly by the Fort Plain Museum and the Fort Plain Cemetery Association; the next hill north (or west if you use the upriver-downriver designation) from “Fort Hill” is “Sand Hill” – almost any local resident can tell you that and it hasn’t changed in 200 years.

The “Fort Hill” property was originally part of Expense Lot B in the Bleecker Patent purchased jointly by Casper Lipe (Liep, Lieb, Lype, etc) and his son Adam in 1772 (see Albany County Deeds). The northern portion was inherited by Johannes Lipe, Sr. and willed to his son David Lipe along with the adjacent Homestead lot #2 and Lowland lot #2 in the Bleecker Patent (Montgomery County Wills). David willed the property to his son Seeber (Montgomery County Wills). Currently, The Fort Plain Museum owns the portion that was originally owned by Johannes, while the Cemetery Association owns the smaller piece originally in Adam Lipe’s possession.

Elsewhere Ken Johnson has attempted to introduce confusion concerning Jephtha R. Simm’s description of the location of Fort Plain. Johnson made reference to an earlier Sand Hill Church Cemetery, once owned by the village, which is located to the north or west of “Fort Hill”. Johnson inferred that Simms was actually pinpointing a location west of *that* cemetery on “Sand Hill” - the site that he (Johnson) has proposed as the location of Fort Plank/Fort Plain. It was clearly intended to cast unwarranted doubt on the “Fort

Hill” site, for Johnson notes on his own web site that the current Fort Plain Cemetery location was purchased in 1846 and the Sand Hill Cemetery was abandoned by 1851. Simms was writing thirty years later in 1881 when there was only one Fort Plain Village Cemetery - on the hilltop that is still in use today. More to the point, Ken Johnson obviously knew that to be true because he wrote about on his web site, yet he attempted to create confusion to further his own agenda. Those are the tactics of a propagandist, not a historian.

F. W. Beers & Company made their contribution to the controversy in 1878, stating in their History of Montgomery County and Fulton Counties, N.Y. : [<sup>\(8\)</sup>](#)

*The fortification called Fort Plank was situated on elevated ground, nearly four miles south-west from Fort Plain, and consisted of a small palisaded enclosure embracing a dwelling, which has for years been known as the late Chauncey House place, and is now owned by Reuben Failing, and occupied by his son Joseph. When fortified it was owned by a family named Plank, on which account it was thus named. . . . This fort is supposed to have been established in 1777, and well did it answer its purpose.*

The mileage and directional information is once again estimated and fluctuates wildly from writer to writer. What does not fluctuate is the site identified. As with Lossing’s description, Fort Plank is said to have been on the Revolutionary War era farm owned by the Plank family and later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the House and Failing families. Again, I think that description only fits one location - the Paris Road site of Fort Plank.

Washington Frothingham, in his History of Montgomery County , added his own twist to the location controversy in 1892:

*In common with other towns in the Mohawk Valley, the settlements in Minden were ravaged by Brant and Johnson in 1870. At the time of Brant's incursion the men mostly absent, the women were shut up in the forts for safety. There were several of these forts located near Fort Plain. The fort which gives the place its name was erected on the summit of a hill half a mile northwest of village. It was probably built under the direction of Colonel Willett and was considered one of the strongest fortifications in the valley. It has been erroneously stated that this fort was built during the French war, by a French engineer. . . . At the time of its erection, Lawrence Gross was a boy living near by. He states the fort received its name "because, from the eminence upon which it stood, there was such a plain or prospective view." Mr. Gross also said that the workmen who had its erection in charge were permitted to name the fort. It was elevated more than fifty feet above the Mohawk and its palisade enclosed about one-third of an acre, with an entrance upon the southeasterly side. In the diagonally opposite corners of this enclosure were erected two small block-houses each containing cannon and projecting far enough to command two sides of the fort. Within a distance of two or three rods, on the side of the hill was a living spring which was of great boon to the garrison. It is not known who was first in command, but Colonel Willett was certainly there during the summer of 1780 and 1781, and then occupied the most eastern of three or four little huts built on the side of the hill below the pickets, and within a short distance of the spring. Their erection was required by the limited amount of room within the palisades . . .*



*One writer has confounded this fort with another called "Fort Plank," assuming that they were one and the same. This, however, was not the case, for the latter was a distinct fortification, situated nearly four miles southwest of Fort Plain. . . .*

*Fort Plank, which was another historic place of defence, occupied, as has been stated, a commanding position on elevated ground four miles southwest of Fort Plain and was originally the residence of a respectable German family whose name it bore. . . . The fort comprised a block-house and also a palisade, which surrounded a dwelling known for many years after as the Chauncey House place, and in later years owned by Reuben Failing, and occupied by his son Joseph.<sup>(9)</sup> The fortification of the place is said to have been made in 1777, one year after the erection of Forts Plain, Herkimer, and Dayton . . .*

In the note above (9), Johnson identifies this location as the farm “now owned by Lynden Failing”, but a search of Montgomery County real property tax records reveals no property in Montgomery County owned by anyone with that name.

The history of land tenure given in Frothingham (1892) is, once again, consistent with the Paris Road location of Fort Plank.

In 1903, Francis B. Heitman published the Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, from its Organization, September 29, 1789, to March 2, 1903.<sup>(10)</sup> In Volume Two he dedicated a portion of his work to *Forts, etc., and locations*. In the right hand column of each page he dealt with where the posts were situated and stated the location of Fort Plank was:

*On [the] Mohawk River, about 10 miles northwest of Fort Plain .*

Heitman is concerned primarily with identifying individual officers who served in the United States Army. The scope of the book is national, so it is no surprise that specific regional geographic information might be somewhat inaccurate – note that he uses the modifier “about” in the location. On a national scale the difference between 3 miles and 10 miles is negligible, and for the average user of this book it would make no difference. It is clear Johnson is adding meaningless references in an attempt to illustrate that everyone is confused, except him. –W.L.

On a 1905 Map of the Village of Fort Plain, the site of Fort Plain, and thus Fort Plank, appears on the "Old David W. Lipe Farm" which was then owned by Charles McCarthy.<sup>(11)</sup> Interestingly enough is the fact that sometime between 1868,<sup>(12)</sup> and 1905, the "site" of the Old Fort Plain Church is noted to have been identified. However, the Church not only appears to the west of the fort versus easterly of the fort as in earlier sketches, but the site is shown to be nearly a half a mile south of the site of the Bleeker Patent Church Lot in the northwestern corner of Bleeker's Expense Lot "A".

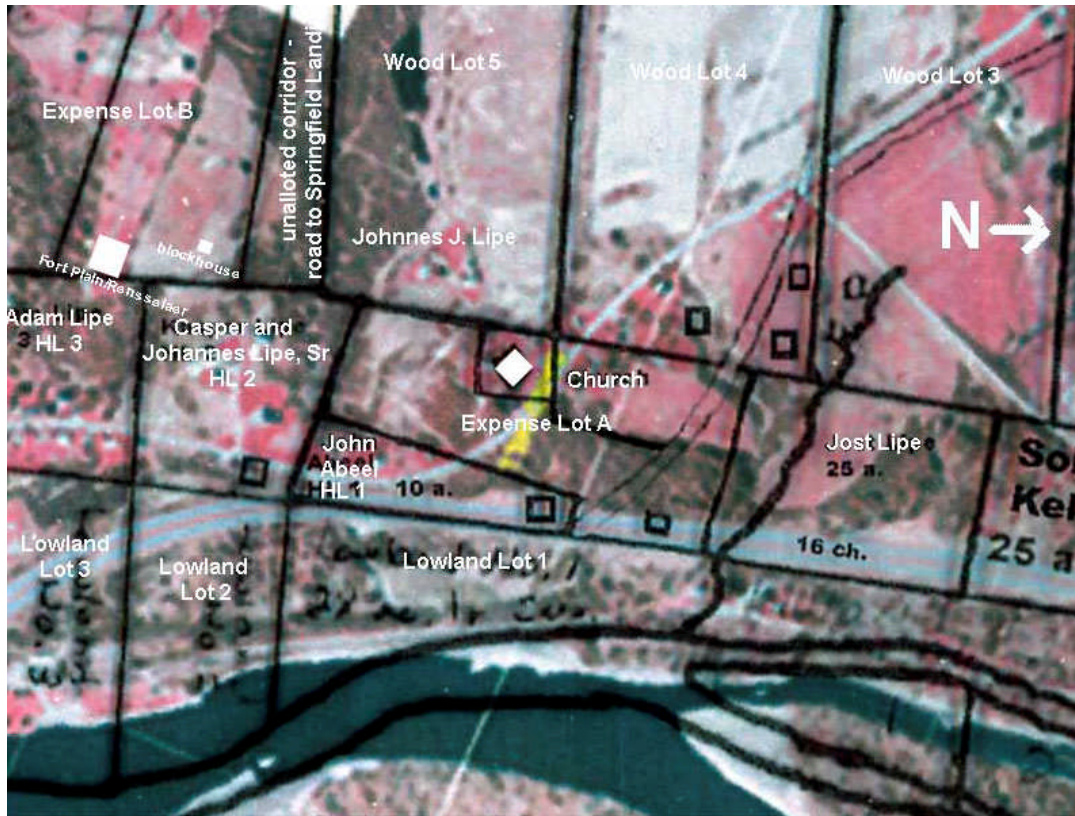
“the site of Fort Plain, and thus Fort Plank” - once again Johnson *begins* with the erroneous assumption that Fort Plain and Fort Plank refer to the same fortification – the *a priori* argument. As the computer programmer’s adage goes: “garbage in, garbage out.”

The “*earlier sketches*” that Johnson refers to are the original woodcut that was published in *The Fort Plain Watchtower* in 1837 and the re-engraved version done in 1838 for Stone’s, *Life of Joseph Brant*. Neither of these views was done from “life” as the blockhouse was torn down before the end of 1810. The church shown in these views ***may be*** the 1785 church, but the 1772 church (note that I said ***1772*** - not 1761 – the deed was still in possession of the Fort Plain Dutch Reformed Church in the 1880s when Rufus Grider examined it and recorded the 1772 date) was burned by Brant in 1780. In my opinion these views both look north from the current Fort Plain Museum Property, owned in 1780 by Johannes Lipe, Senior, and in 1905 by Charles McCarthy. Archaeological excavations have confirmed the location of a 30’ square building surrounded by earthworks believed to be the block-house depicted from memory in this “sketch”. This interpretation is in complete harmony with information on the 1905 map.

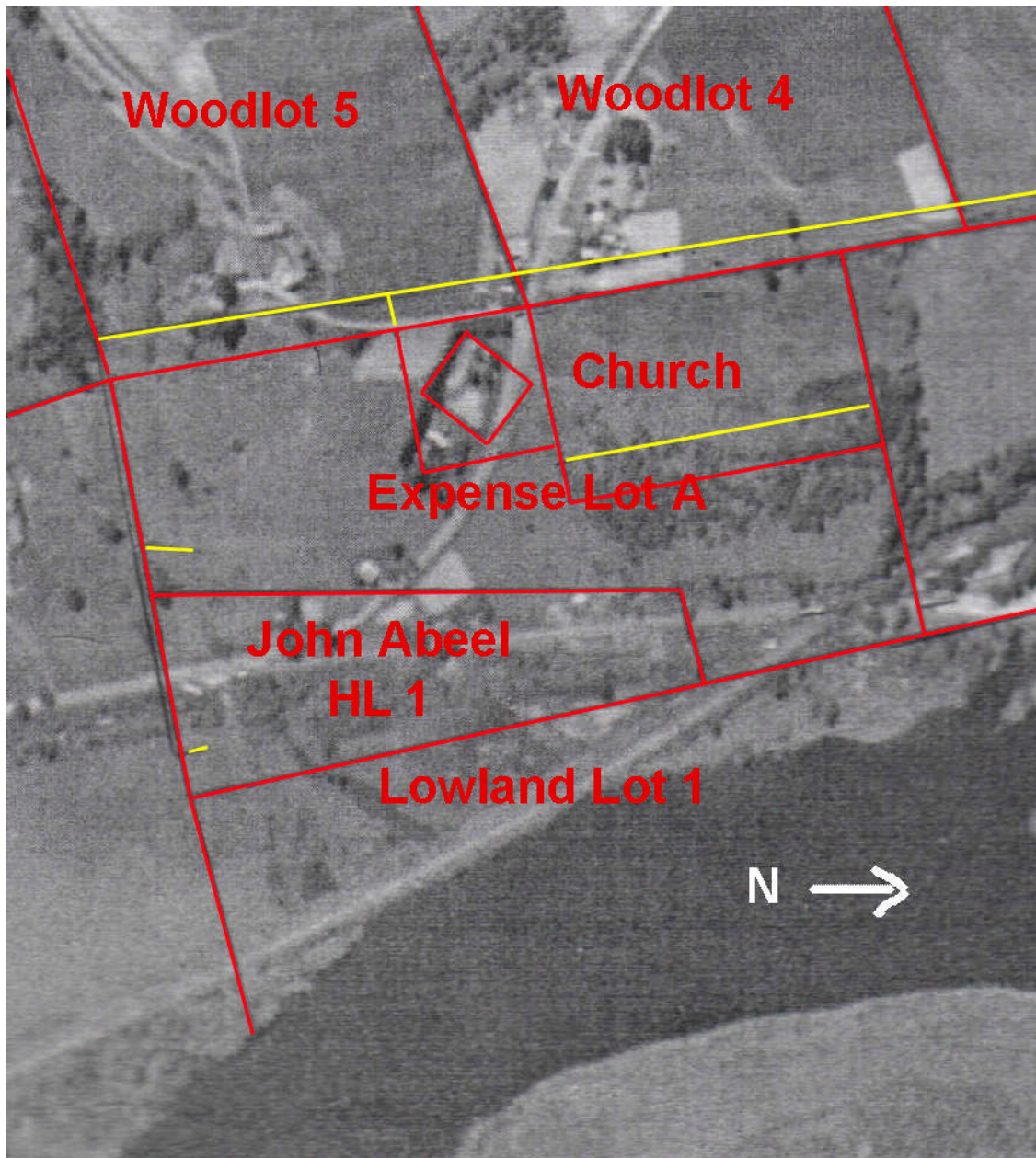
Ken Johnson has chosen to believe that the “sketch” is actually made from a vantage point about a half-mile *north* of Sand Hill, looking south or in the opposite direction. No archaeological work has been done at that site, but Mr. Johnson says that that a “diamond-shaped” soil anomaly which he has detected in maps and aerial views marks the “real” site of the blockhouse that he believes was called both ***Fort Plain*** and ***Fort Plank***. He is apparently better trained in both archaeology and GIS than I, because I can not see the anomaly or structure that he has identified, unless he is referring to the square clearly marked “church” on the map.

Jon Vidulich and I have each produced overlays of the 1772 Bleecker Patent map on modern orthographic and aerial projections utilizing Abeel Island, Verplank Island, existing fence lines and hedgerows to align the lots. Our independent efforts produced identical results, and both clearly place the Church Lot (Expense Lot A) in the Bleecker Patent on Sand Hill well south of the site that Johnson advocates. Once again our interpretation is in agreement with the 1905 map. –W.L.





W. Lenig's version - Bleecker Patents overlaid on a modern orthographic projection. The map that I used for the overlay was taken from Ken Johnson's website. Note that someone has sketched Rte 5-S in on the patent map nearly 1/8<sup>th</sup> mile north of the actual location of that road on the orthographic projection. Perhaps this explains Johnson's misunderstanding of the lot boundaries in this area. The patent map, made in 1772, shows the location of the *early* church (1772-1780). Please note that it was on the south side of Rte 5-S. The post-war rebuilt church was on the north side of the same road as was its cemetery. Nearly all subsequent researchers have assumed the second church was rebuilt on the original site, but that obviously was not the case. -W.L.



Jon Vidulich version of Bleeker Patents overlaid on 1935 aerial photos. This is at a much larger scale than my attempt and only shows the Sand Hill lots. Note once again that the 1772 church was located on the south side of Rte 5-S. Note also that the Sand Hill school, which is still standing, falls just within the eastern bounds of Expense Lot A. This gives us an independent verification that the lot lines are correct because we know that the school was built within the bounds of Expense Lot A – originally public land. The red lot lines are accurate, the yellow show a possible alternate interpretation, but the variation is negligible. –W.L.

Nelson Greene, in 1947, made his contribution to the debate, writing that *Fort Planck* was located . . . near present Route 5S about three miles west of Fort Plain. <sup>(13)</sup>



Using a GIS database (DeLorme) the Paris Road site measures under 500 yards from Rte 5-S (the Dutchtown Road). I think that qualifies as “near.” The same site measures exactly 2.98 miles in a straight line from the intersection of Canal and Main Streets in downtown Fort Plain. That certainly seems like “about three miles” to me.

The point is, there is nothing arbitrary about Greene's description of the location of Fort Plank, and it is in perfect agreement with the Paris Road location advocated by Lossing, Simms and Frothingham. The south 25 acres of lot #2 in the Windecker Patent was the same property known as the Abram and Chauncey House home in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Adam, Reuben and Joseph Failing home in last quarter of that same century. This can be verified by checking the 1853 Montgomery County Wall Map, the 1868 Stranahan and Nichols Atlas and the 1905 New Century Atlas of Montgomery County. –W.L.



1853 Wall Map showing “C[hauncey] House” at the Paris Road Fort Plank location.





1868 Atlas showing A[bram] House at the Paris Road Fort Plank location.



1905 New Century Atlas showing A.T. Failing at the Paris Road Fort Plank site.

Even more confusing is Henry Allen's 1957 typescript, "Historic Forts of N.Y. State: a brief study."

*. . . Canajoharie is beyond, Palatine Bridge opposite. The former was burned in the first raid. Here was a stone house at first named Fort Plain or the Rensselaer; this is now the home of the club of the same name. Beyond the present village or Fort Plain was a fort of the same name. An old print of this survives. This was substantial work, square, with a palisade and towers. It may have been strengthened with a mound and it had a blockhouse in the center. To this fort came Washington in 1783, where he was received with military honors by Colonel Clyde. Much of this still remains. Beyond on the south side were Fort Plank and Fort Willett, these [were] probably fortified houses .*

Well of course! Who the heck is Henry Allen, and why would anyone ever try to use such an obscure unpublished secondary source???? It was probably written by someone living in the mid-west who had no first-hand knowledge of Mohawk Valley geography. This is just another "red herring" inserted to make it *seem* as though there is generally a lot of confusion and no agreement on the location of these sites. -W.L.

Colonel Charles B. Briggs, Curator of Johnson Hall State Historical Site in Johnstown, New York, in March of 1970, published his opinion of the location and description of Fort Plank: . . . *1 mile west of Fort Plain, NY. . . . And was a . . . Fortified wooden farm house. No longer standing. Owned then by Plank Family.*

A general description not meant to be utilized by someone trying to pinpoint the physical site. Rte 5-S is popularly considered to run east and west, so Briggs was suggesting that Fort Plank was *about* a mile on 5-S, west of either Fort Plain village or the site of revolutionary Fort Plain, it's not clear which is meant. From the center of town he was off by nearly two miles; from the Revolutionary War site he was off by a little over one mile. So it's an estimate! Brigg's knew where he meant. Where was this published? - W.L.

In November of 1978, Mr. Wayne Lenig, an instructor at the Fulton-Montgomery County College, reported he had identified the site of Fort Plain. Larry Wright, a reporter for the Amsterdam Recorder of Amsterdam, New York, carried a three segment feature on research being conducted at Lenig's site well over a half a mile due south of the fort location identified by J. R. Simms, W. L. Stone, and Benjamin Lossing.<sup>(14)</sup>

This is sheer bravado! The site identified by Simms and Lossing was clearly on "Fort Hill" just within the northern boundary of the Village of Fort Plain" as documented in my notes above – the same site that was investigated archaeologically. Stone's location is less specific, but there is nothing in his writings that suggest he had anything other than "Fort Hill" in mind. Maybe Johnson believes that if he keeps saying this enough times people will simply begin to accept his word. Boy, does that sound like a familiar strategy! -W.L.

*Don Tuttle, director of the Fort Plain Museum, and Wayne Lenig, an archeologist and*



*instructor at Fulton-Montgomery County Community College, have in the past year made significant advances in their search for the truth about historic Fort Plain.*

*With monies from state grants [and] matching money from FMCC [Fulton-Montgomery County Community College, Johnstown, New York] the men launched a renewed search for the actual fort site. Through the [edit to manuscript] utilization of infra red aerial photography, archeological excavations, piecing together at best sketchy Revolutionary written accounts, and educated guesses formed from existing information about other revolutionary fort sites, the two men are now in a position to dispel some of the most prevalent myths which for years have grown up around Fort Plain.*

*The exact location, configuration, and rough dimensions of Fort Plain have been determined. It was previously believed that the fort covered the entire hilltop because of the discovery of a blockhouse site on the far northeastern corner of the hill; it was assumed that the blockhouse was contained inside the fortification, and subsequent excavations were centered on the gently rolling, grassy hilltop near the blockhouse. Nothing was uncovered except an Indian burial site. . . .*

*The men knew the fort site was not adjacent to the blockhouse; several secondary reference materials such as letters made hazy references to that particular site, and a few artifacts <sup>(15)</sup> had been recovered from the area.*

Johnson's note (15) reads: *"The artifacts displayed in an accompanying newspaper photograph included; a straight razor, three two-tined cooking forks with their wooden handles nearly intact, a butcher knife with its wooden handle nearly intact and a few fragments of a pottery plate."*

These artifacts are all characteristic 18<sup>th</sup> century forms that wouldn't be easily recognized by someone who is not a trained historical archaeologist or material culture specialist. The "pottery plate" fragment was feather-edged creamware manufactured in England between 1765 and 1785. The two-tined forks had bone handles, which explains why they were still "nearly intact". This type was replaced in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by more modern forms, and the "butcher knife" is actually a table knife with a bulbous end and bone handle – the most common 18<sup>th</sup> century form.

If Johnson was inferring that domestic or household artifacts indicate this site was something other than a military fortification, he is sadly misinformed because domestic goods are always the most common finds on 18<sup>th</sup> century fort sites. No matter what else the soldiers did, they had to live (eat, drink and sleep) within the confines of the fortification. For the record, however, there were many military buttons, gun parts, lead musket balls, iron cannon projectiles, etc. uncovered during these excavations as well. – W.L.

*The work went slowly during the short summer months, with only the discovery of Indian refuse pits and artifacts as a reward. Then with time growing short, the men contracted to have a bulldozer come onto the site and make wide, panning six inch deep swaths about the site, in a "last ditch effort" to find some part of the elusive fort site.*



*The attempt was successful. Right away, before trenching, two barrack sites, part of the fort wall, four bastions, trench works, several fire place pits, a wealth of Indian pits, and an extremely subtle, vague hint of what may eventually prove to be the near mythical octagonal blockhouse were discovered. . . .*

*It is believed, on the basis of military strategy that the gates of the fort were located facing the southwest . . .* <sup>(16)</sup>

*The blockhouse plans have been found in the archives of the Massachusetts Antiquarian Society; the design calling for a square blockhouse, and they have been validated by archeological excavations in the early 1960's, according to Fort Plain Museum Director Don Tuttle, who laments that the plans for the fort have never been recovered. . . .* <sup>(17)</sup>

This is a newspaper account written by a journalist; it is not an archaeological report. With that caveat in mind, I would still say that it is a pretty good summary of the 1975 excavations, but it should be noted that the archaeological excavations did not end in 1975, they continued in 1976. For a more accurate account of the archaeology that was accomplished on Fort Hill between 1961 and 1976 see Wayne Lenig, *Revolutionary War Fort Plain: A Closer Look*, 2009.

Oh, and it wasn't a bulldozer, it was a Euclid pan or earthmover which makes a nice clean cut, removing only the plow-torn topsoil and clearly revealing any man-made disturbances in the virgin subsoil. – W.L.

The search for Fort Plank's Site has also been further complicated by historical documentation, such as the following from the Journals of the New York State Senate: <sup>(18)</sup>

*Monday Morning, February 23, 1780.*

*. . . Petition of Joseph House praying some Recompense for the Use of his House and other Buildings, occupied by the Troops as a fortified Place, commonly called Fort Plank, . . . read and referred to Mr. Fonda and Mr. Klock. . . .—*

In what sense can historical documentation “complicate” the identification of the Fort Plank site? Is Johnson actually complaining here that historical documentation is refuting his undocumented speculation? –W.L.

This aforesaid historical document led Lenig, to state in 2001, that without the slightest doubt, Fort Plank was located on the now Lynden Failing Farm on Paris Road in Minden Township of Montgomery County. To prove his theory correct, he cited Mister Herbert Schrader's 1999, typescript entitled, "18<sup>th</sup> Century Land Patents in the Town of Minden":

This is not “Lenig’s theory.” Every researcher since Lossing has identified the same site, and a contemporary document offers even more compelling evidence.

No one ever mentioned the “Lynden Failing Farm,” and it is not clear where that property is located. Current tax maps indicate the Paris Road location of Fort Plank is owned by

Wendy Ayres and by John J. and Maureen Conroy.

We also know where Joseph House lived. Through the diligent efforts of Mr. Herbert Schrader of Utica, New York, we have an excellent picture of the location of many of the 18<sup>th</sup> -century residents in the Town of Minden, drawn from early land records. In the course of his research Mr. Schrader discovered that Lot #2 in a patent granted to Conrad Weiser, John Weiser, John Lawyer, and Johan Peter Wagner (1725) was sold by Johan Peter Wagner, Sr. To Johan Jost House and his wife Oletea on 04/01/1750. Johan Jost House subsequently died, and his widow remarried Frederick Plank. By 1778, title to the home and home lot, had passed to Johan Jost House's son, Captain Joseph House, but the fortified home became known as Fort Plank, rather than Fort House, because Joseph's mother, Oletea and step-father, Frederick **Plank** continued to live there. This also explains the subsequent confusion over whether the property was owned by a family named Plank or House. <sup>(19)</sup>

Mentioning the Weiser Patent portion of the property was an unfortunate mistake, but I am more than willing to admit my fallibility. In addition to lot #2 in the Weiser, Lawyer and Wagner Patent, as Johnson notes below, there was a second parcel appended to the north-eastern section of the Oletea House/Plank property. The appended lot, *where the Frederick Plank home and thus Fort Plank was actually located* was the southernmost 25 acres of original lot #2 in the Hartman Windecker Patent. That parcel was, as Johnson reports, owned by Oletea's third spouse, Frederick Plank. Frederick Plank's date of death becomes an extremely important issue here, as the New York Supreme Court Case cited by Johnson below clearly indicates that the Hartman Windecker Patent Lot #2 property had *devolved* upon Oletea Plank's son [Jacob] Wright *and others* before 1803. Johnson claims that he has documentation proving that Frederick Plank was alive as late as January 1778, and I do not question that, but I am betting that he died before February 1780, when Oletea's son Johann Jost House filed a petition with the state legislature for compensation "*for the Use of his House and other Buildings, occupied by the Troops as a fortified Place, commonly called Fort Plank.*" To date, neither Johnson nor I have been able to document Frederick Plank's death, but I would certainly welcome any help that might be forthcoming. –W.L.

Unfortunately, Mister Schrader apparently failed to reveal to Lenig the source of his data on the sale of Lot 2 of the Weiser/Wagner Patent to Johan Jost House in 1750. <sup>(20)</sup> If one were to check with Mister Schrader and Marilyn J. Cramer of Silver Spring, Maryland, it would be quickly learned that the locator of the aforesaid document was this author. In his letter describing the document to Mister Schrader, Johnson made note that in 1803, Otilia Blank, widow of Frederick, deeded to her sons, Johan Jost House and Jacob Wright, Lot 2 of the Wagner Patent which she and her first husband, Jost House [Senior], had purchased from her father, Peter Wagner, in 1750.

So what - who cares about the identity of the researcher that happened to find the documentation? What is important is the accuracy of that documentation – not *who* happened to uncover it. Once again, I find this to be a very curious and perhaps "personal" view of what historical research is all about. It should be a search for objective truth, not a competition to reveal who does the "best" research. Whether or not Johnson's statements are correct that he "discovered" this information, the fact is that

Schrader got it into print first, so it is his work that gets footnoted. If I had \$5.00 for every time someone beat me into print with a “discovery” that I made, I would have a tidy little sum. Again I say, so what? –W.L.

The proposed ownership of Fort Plank by Captain Joseph House should also lead one to question why none of the well over 200 Revolutionary War Veterans who claimed services within Fort Plank in their post-war pension applications failed to mention his ownership of the fortress. This would seem to suggest that Mister House was, as were the others, a mere occupant of the ramparts.

Why would pension applicants fifty years later know or care who owned the property where Fort Plank stood? Many of the pension applications actually *do* mention that “Major” House lived at the fort. Some might construe that to mean that it was *his* home. –W.L.

One will also note that the **will of Abraham House**, Montgomery County Will 8:376, and Montgomery County Deed 13:174 (Isaac & Catharine Wright to Jacob H. Myer), demonstrate that Delia Blank left to her sons, Joseph House and Jacob Wright, the southernmost 40.8 acres of Lot Three of the Hartman Windecker Patent. This land shares a common border with Lot 2 of the Waggoner Patent. **Interestingly, the owner of Fort Walrath was one Henry Walrath who was appointed an ensign in Captain Joseph House’s Company of the Canajoharie District Regiment of Tryon County Militia in 1780. Thus it appears that Delia Blank and Henry Walrath were, in essence, “next door neighbors”. The juxtapositioning of the homes of Delia Blank and Henry Walrath, whose home was fortified and an known as Fort Walrath would seem to suggest that Fort Plank and Fort Walrath should have only been separated by a few hundred yards versus the nearly two miles stated by Revolutionary War Pensioners make it highly unlikely that both farmsteads were fortified.**

The Windecker Patent was resurveyed in 1799 and the lot boundaries were adjusted causing a great deal of confusion about the lot numbers assigned, especially to Lot #2 and Lot #3. A. Ross Eckler has done a good job of documenting this problem in his essay *The Windecker Patent*. Original Lot #2 actually became New Lot #3 after 1799, and I am quite certain that the Abraham House deed is actually referring to that same property which I have referred to as the southernmost 25 acres in *original Lot #2* – the traditional site of Fort Plank on Paris Road. How it grew from 25 acres to 40.8, I can’t really explain, but it might have something to do with the 1799 resurvey. The creator of the Will cited by Johnson is the same Abram House who Jephtha Simms claimed owned the Fort Plank property when he visited it in 1846 – the son of “Major” Johann Jost House!

As A. Ross Eckler has clearly documented, Lt. Henry Walrath whose home was palisaded and called Fort Walrath, actually lived on Lot # 9A of the Windecker Patent, about 1¼ miles northwest of the Paris Road Fort Plank site.

A document in the Continental Congress Papers also proves that Frederick Blank was alive and quite capable of traveling long distances as late as May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1775, when he and several other residents of the Theobald Young and Hartman Windecker Patents, testified that while transporting wheat to Albany they were waylaid by Indians east of Guy

Johnson's home.<sup>(21)</sup> Legal documents also demonstrate that Blank was living as late as January 18th, 1778, when he signed two receipts for payments made to his step-daughter, Margaret Witmosure, the former widow of Theobald Young. From this one could conclude that neither Joseph House or his half-brother, Jacob Wright, held any right or title to the said Lot 2 during the American Revolution and thus would not be legally entitled to make claims against the State for usage of the same.

If one did conclude that, they would probably be wrong. As stepsons and the only male progeny of Frederick Plank's legal wife, both Wright and House might have a legal claim to their stepfather's property after his death, particularly since there is no evidence that Frederick Plank had any biological heirs.

During the American Revolution, Frederick and Delia Blank also occupied the southernmost 25 acres of Lot Two of the Hartman Windecker Patent. An 1808 lawsuit brought by Jacob Wright in the Albany Circuit of the New York State Court for the Trial and Impeachments and Correction of Errors, notes that Lot Two of the Hartman Windecker Patent was conveyed by Hartman Windecker to his daughter, Gertrude on March 28, 1754, and that she and her husband, Jacobus Pickerd, in turn, conveyed their acreage to Frederick Blank in 1765 and that the ownership remained in Blank until May of 1803 (Jackson ex dem. Wright and others, against Diefendorf and Zoller.<sup>(21a)</sup> This fact is also borne out in Montgomery County Deeds 13:174 & 13: 400 (Isaac & Catharine Wright to Jacob H. Myer; & Delia Blank to Joseph House and Jacob Wright, consecutively), & Montgomery County Will 8:376 (Abraham House, deceased). These are proven to have shared a common border with Lot Three of the Peter Waggoner Patent. Interestingly, the partial owner of Lot Three of the Windecker Patent was the same Henry Walrath who was appointed an ensign in Captain Joseph House's Company of the Canajoharie District Regiment of Tryon County Militia in 1780. Thus, Delia Blank and Henry Walrath were "next door neighbors." The juxta-positioning of the homes of Delia Blank and Henry Walrath, whose home was fortified and an known as Fort Walrath would seem to suggest that Fort Plank and Fort Walrath should have only been separated by a few hundred yards versus the nearly two miles stated by Revolutionary War Pensioners.

"that the ownership remained in Blank until May of 1803". Not true - the actual Supreme Court decision reads: *"That Pickard and his wife conveyed the 25 acres to Frederick Blank, who devised the same to [Johann Jost] House and [Jacob] Wright, two of the lessors of the plaintiff; that in 1765, Blank took possession of the premises under the deed, and such possession continued in him, and in others claiming under him, until May 1803, when Wright, the tenant, was turned out of possession, by a writ of possession, under a judgment by default, in an action of ejectment, in favor of the present defendants, against Wright."*

So it appears that Frederick Plank's stepsons, Johann Jost House and Jacob Wright actually did claim title to the property at some point before 1803. The question is: how long before 1803 did they assume ownership of the southernmost 25 acres in original lot #2? Was it as early as 1780, when Johann Jost petitioned to be compensated *"for the Use of his House and other Buildings, occupied by the Troops as a fortified Place, commonly*

*called Fort Plank”? I’ll bet it was.*

A. Ross Eckler’s detailed essay *The Windecker Patent*, formerly available at <http://www.rootsweb.com/~nymontgo/minden/windecker.html>, traces the ownership (as far is possible) for each lot in the Windecker Patent from 1731 until well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Contrary to Johnson’s assertion, Eckler found no evidence that Ensign Henry Walrath ever owned any part of lot #3, but his son may have held a mortgage for part of new lot #3 [original Lot #2] in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. 18<sup>th</sup> century census information led Eckler to deduce that Captain Jacob Diefendorf lived on this lot prior to and during the war. Ironically Capt. Diefendorf’s home was fortified in the spring and summer of 1780 and burned by Brant in August of that same year – so, yes, another fort did exist for at least a short time on the lot adjacent to Fort Plank, and it was only about a half-mile north. In 1969 Donald Lenig identified the burned foundation of Fort Diefendorf on the north bank of Oaks Creek within the bounds of Lot #3. Diefendorf sold or lost the lot after his home was burned and it was subsequently purchased by his nieces and nephews (the children of his neighbor and brother Captain Henry Diefendorf who was killed at Oriskany) and who’s progeny held onto the land throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Eckler also documented the location of Lt. Henry Walrath’s fortified home. Lt. Henry Walrath lived on lot 9A of the Windecker Patent, having inherited the lot from his father, the pioneer Henry Walrath. The current home on that lot is 1.8 miles northwest of the Paris Road Fort Plank site, but there is reason to believe that Walrath’s 18<sup>th</sup> century home was located further south in lot 9A, about 1.75 miles from Fort Plank, and nearer to due west than northwest. Lt. Walrath’s home was also fortified and burned by Brant in August of 1780 after the inhabitants abandoned it and fled to the river. –W.L.

With Lenig’s identification of Lot 2 Wagoner’s Patent as the “true” site of Fort Plank, it comes as a complete surprise that Catherine Gansevoort states that the majority of the women and children made it into Fort Plank for safety on August 2, 1780. It is surprising that Thomas Sammons would state that a woman in Fort Plank raised the alarm, and that Colonel Abraham Wemple would note that Fort Plank was filled with women and children. It is surprising that of the 52 women and children taken prisoner on that fateful day, all but one, were from a family headed by a member of Captain Joseph House’s Company. It is surprising that of the known locations of these families, the bulk of them were living at or near the Geisenburgh Settlement, stated to have been three to four miles from Fort Plank. And, it is shocking that the inhabitants of Fort Walrath on that fateful day would have been “driven out from their fort” and to make their way to Fort Plank some one and a half to two miles distant if indeed Fort Plank did stand upon the property adjoining Walrath’s.

I think all of this has already been addressed. The Wagner’s Patent statement was an unfortunate mistake on my part – Fort Plank was located on original lot #2 in the adjacent **Windecker Patent** – I hope I have cleared that up. I don’t understand Johnson’s surprise with any of these facts. Brant’s men were attacking from the northwestern part of the Windecker Patent, so it isn’t surprising to me that people living south and west of Fort Plank would have an opportunity to flee eastward into that fort. According to Lt. Clement’s report, the Indians found Fort Walrath already abandoned, and as we have seen from A. Ross Eckler’s research cited above, that fort was about 1.75 miles west of

Fort Plank on lot 9A - **not next door on lot #3 as Johnson would have it.**

Further, Wemple said that “a fort erected near Mr. Abeel’s house” was “full of sorrowful women and children.” Thomas Sammons and Robert H. Wendell both identified this as “Fort Plain” and note that after a short stop at Fort Plain Wemple “proceeded to Fort Plank a short distance further” and “stayed in the fort that night.” Wemple’s letter is headed at “Fort Plank” at 7 PM and he says “the enemy began setting fire & destroying some way near *this place* [ie Fort Plank] & proceeded on to Canojohary; near the river burnt their Church, Abeel’s house & its neighborhood & upwards, where they ... got sight of us & then retreated. ... Great devastation is committed south west of this place [ie Fort Plank].” He said a great deal about what he observed between the two forts, but didn’t write anything about the conditions he observed at Fort Plank.

The facts once again indicate that Fort Plain was near the river in the Sand Hill neighborhood, where Brant’s men burned John Abeel’s house and the Canajohary Church, and that Fort Plank was a short distance north or west near the South Shore Highway or Dutchtown Road. The area between the two forts was devastated by Brant’s war party. Careful reading and discrimination is 9/10ths of analysis. –W.L.

Also unaddressed in writing is the identity the wife of Captain Jost House. Joseph's wife was none other than Elizabeth Young, sole surviving daughter of Johan Adam Young. Who was, by virtue of her father's Loyalty to the British Crown, heir to large tracts of land in the Theobald Young Patent, the Philip Livingston Patent, the Frederick Young Patent, and, the Rutger Bleeker Patent. <sup>(22)</sup> These facts make it highly probable that Fort Plank was located on lands held by or possessed by Frederick Blank, Johan Adam Young, Frederick Young at the outset of the American Revolution. Thus, Fort Plank could have been located anywhere on the Bleeker Patent, the Theobald Young Patent, the Frederick Young Patent, the Philip Livingston Patent, or any other patent to which the aforesaid parties held title.

I really don’t think the identity of Jost House’s wife has much bearing on where Fort Plank was located. There was, after all, a reason that contemporaries called it “Fort Plank” – obviously it was on Plank’s property, not on the Loyalist Young estates. This is another of Johnson’s “red herring” arguments meant to divert attention from the obvious logic of the Paris Road site. –W.L.

Thus, Identifying the true site of Fort Plank is comparable to identifying the whereabouts of the Scarlet Pimpernel: <sup>(23)</sup>

*They seek him here. They seek him there. Those Frenchies seek him everywhere. Is he in heaven? Or, is he in hell? That damned elusive Pimpernel.*

In the movie "*Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*", Professor Henry "Indiana" Jones, Junior relates to his class of archeology students the following axiom: <sup>(24)</sup>

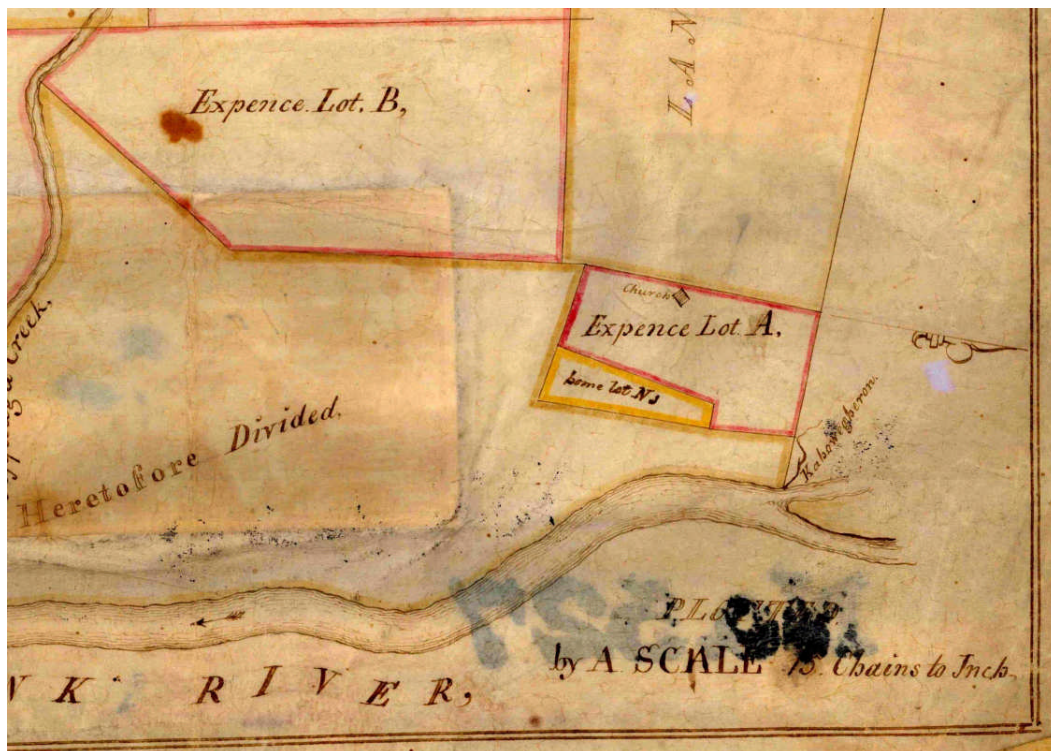
*... seventy percent of all archeology is done in the library -- research -- reading -- we cannot afford to take mythology at face value ...*



AMEN ! -W.L.

Early Mohawk Valley maps, <sup>(25)</sup> contemporary documents, and [an early sketch by William L. Stone](#), <sup>(26)</sup> suggest that Fort Plank was built upon or very near [the Church Lot of Bleeker's Patent Expense Lot "A"](#) on three acres of land excepted by Surveyor Jeremiah Van Rensselaer for public usage. <sup>(27)</sup> Indeed, John Yordan, stated that when Joseph Brant attacked the Upper Canajoharie Settlements he destroyed the church <sup>(28)</sup> which was within gunshot of Fort Plank. <sup>(29)</sup>

(25) Jeremiah Van Rensselaer's Map of the 1772 Division of the Rutger Bleeker Patent, found within the Albany County Clerk's Office and matching a map of the said 1772 Division found within the Rutger Bleeker Papers (NYSL MSS #SC10816-5), represents a potential fort site on the western edge of Expense Lot "A" with a small black diamond within three acres which Van Rensselaer had stated was set aside for a public road (Field Book of the 1772 Division of the Rutger Bleeker Patent within the New York State Archives). This potential site is located very near the southwest corner of the "Church Lot" and the northeastern corner of Upper Woodland Lot 5 of the Rutger Bleeker Patent



Above is the portion of the map that Johnson discusses in note (25), also copied above. Note that North arrow is pointing to the right.

Do I have to even comment on this? I see some slight foxing or discoloration to the manuscript due to mildew and mold, but try as I may, I cannot see "the small black diamond" that Johnson describes, unless he is referring to the rectangular icon clearly marked "Church." Can this be accepted as evidence of a fortification? - And what is meant by a "potential site"? To me nearly any hilltop with a good view and source of

water would be a potential fort site. There are a whole lot of those in the Town of Minden. I hope Johnson is not suggesting that every other “potential site” be eliminated *before* we accept Lossing and Simms logic.

Stone’s “early sketch” of the blockhouse is a re-engraved copy of the 1837 *Fort Plain Watchtower* blockhouse wood block engraving with the caption changed from Fort Plain to Fort Plank. The original was ostensibly carved in 1837, *at least* 27 years after the blockhouse was taken down. How much stock can we place in a *copy* of an undocumented conjectural view? We don’t know who did the original engraving, or what he or she based it on.

To counter Johnsons’s last point, I will quote directly from the John “Yordon” (now spelled Yerdon) pension record (S 26982). The passage relates to Brant’s August 2, 1780 raid on the Canajohary settlement. After destroying the Oneida village at *Canawarohare*: “Brant ... took a circuitous rout on the south side of the Mohawk River about forty miles down to the upper part of then Conajoharie, burning, murdering, scalping and taking prisoners, not excepting the elegant Dutch Reformed Church within a gunshot of *Fort Plain*, at the same time the enemy driving 300 head of cattle of the inhabitants.”

Johnson has Yerdon saying that “*Fort Plank*” was within gunshot of the Dutch Reformed Church on Sand Hill. If that was true it would certainly support one of Johnson’s hypotheses, (ie. that Fort Plank was on or adjacent to Sand Hill), but as we can see, Yerdon did not say that. He said “*Fort Plain*” was within gunshot of the church, and that supports the traditionally accepted location of *Fort Plain/Fort Rensselaer* on the Expense lot B lands of Adam and Johannes Lipe, Sr., adjacent to Sand Hill on the south (or east going by the fact that it is “downriver”).

While substituting “Fort Plank” for “Fort Plain” in a quoted document might seem an unforgivable misrepresentation to many serious researchers and historians, Johnson probably felt that he was justified in doing it, because in his own mind he has already “proven” that Fort Plank and Fort Plain were the same fort. This is called an *a priori* argument, and it is an easy logical fallacy to fall into. He is, however, fooling no one but himself.

Indeed, even the great Revolutionary War Historian Benjamin [Lossing's description of Fort Plain](#) fits only a site on :<sup>(30)</sup>

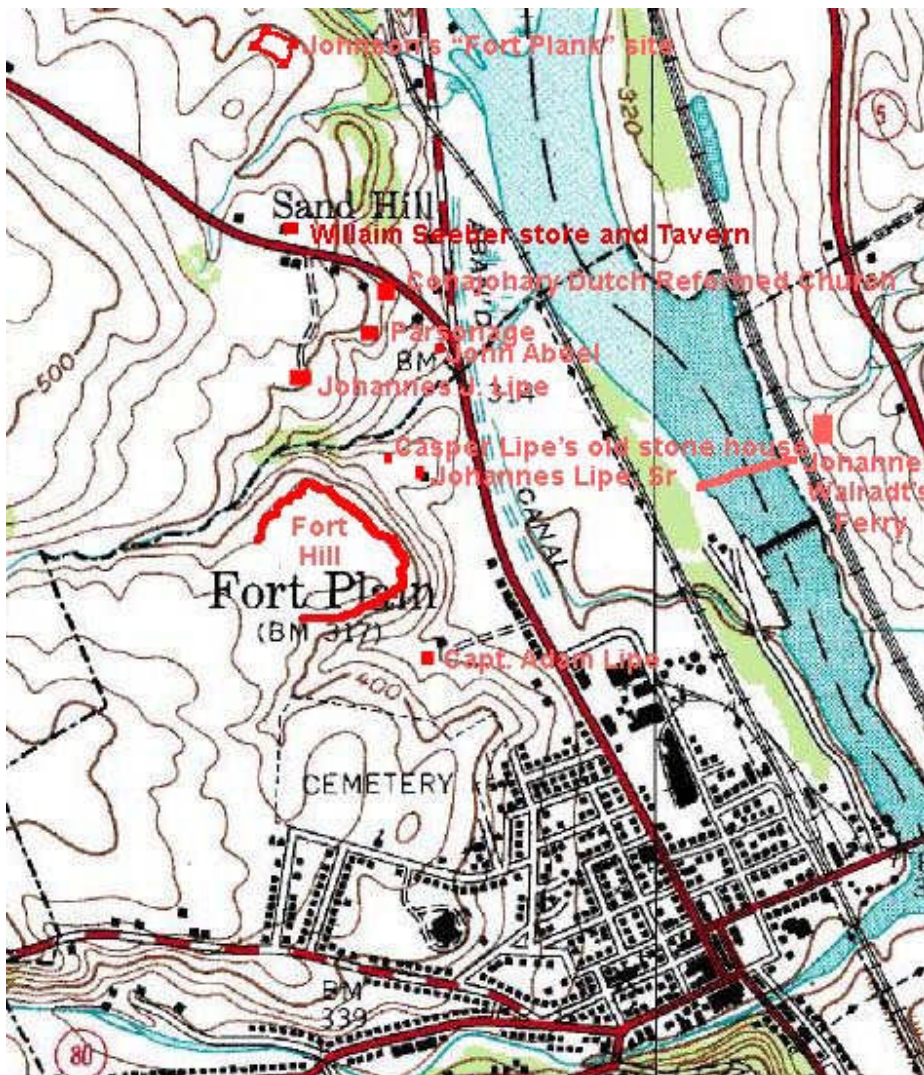
*... Its form was an irregular quadrangle, with earth and log bastions, embrasures, at each corner, and barracks and a strong block-house within. The plain on which it stood is of peninsular form, and across the neck, or isthmus, a breast-work was thrown up. The fort extended along the brow of a hill northwest of the village, and the block-house was a few rods from the northern declivity . . .*

*Some time after the completion of the work, doubts were expressed of its being cannon-ball proof. A trial was made with a six pounder placed at a proper distance. Its ball passed entirely through the block-house, crossed a broad ravine, and lodged in the hill on which the old parsonage stands, an eighth of a mile distant . . .*<sup>(31)</sup>



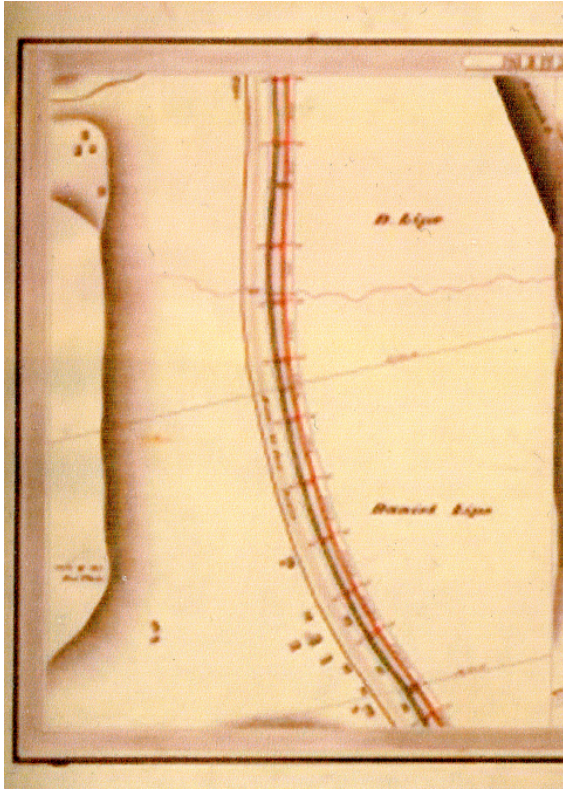
*This place was included in the Canajoharie settlement, and in 1780 felt severely the vengeance of the Tories and Indians. . . . The approach of the dreaded Thayendanegea . . . was announced to the people, . . . by a woman who fired a cannon at the fort. . . . In their approach the enemy burned every dwelling and barn, destroyed the crops, and carried off every thing of value. Regardless of the strength of the fort, they marched boldly up within cannon-shot of the intrenchments, burned the church, the parsonage, and many other buildings, and carried off several women and children prisoners .*

What am I missing here? Lossing says that Fort Plain was “*along the brow of a hill northwest of the village* [of Fort Plain]”, and that the hill top was level or as he puts it “a plain” and “*of peninsular form*”. He notes that entrenchments or earthworks were erected on the isthmus or narrow headlands. He states further that the parsonage on Sand Hill was about 1/8<sup>th</sup> mile from the fort. I will insert a topographic map here to illustrate how well this description fits the traditional location of Fort Plain.



By the way, Lossing's first name was Benson, not "Benjamin".

The earliest map showing “the scite of Old Fort Plain” at the Expense Lot B location predates all of the secondary historical works except Campbell. Dated in 1834, just three years after *Annals of Tryon County* was published, this Erie Canal Survey Map provides clear evidence of a virtually unbroken verbal tradition of the location of Fort Plain.



1834 Erie Canal Map showing “Scite of Old Fort Plain” on Expense lot B hilltop directly west of “Daniel Lipe” lot – this was the Adam Lipe farm in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. “D[avid] Lipe” on the next lot north was the Casper né Johannes Lipe farm in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. NY State Archives A0848-77, Canal System Survey Maps, 1832-1843, Map no. E9-7. Sorry for the poor reproduction but a better copy may be accessed at <http://iarchives.nysed.gov/PubImageWeb/viewImageData.jsp?id=147154> –W.L.

Sworn depositions by Revolutionary War soldiers and other contemporary documents clearly suggest that Fort Plank was in use as a military **depot** as early as June of 1777, when members of the companies of Captains Henry Diefendorf and Robert Crouse garrisoned the site. . . . *where Fort Plank was later built* .<sup>(32)</sup> The site was also used by Captain Samuel Pettingell's Company in early August of 1777 to rendezvous with the Mohawk District Regiment of Tryon County Militia during their westward trek to Fort Schuyler and the Battle of Oriskany.<sup>(33)</sup>

I think *outpost* would be a more appropriate description than “*depot*.” There is no evidence that they were storing military stores and supplies at the site before the fort was built and that is what is implied by *depot*. However, several pensioners do mention that they were temporarily “stationed” or encamped at the site “where *Fort Plank* was later

built,” before 1778.

Perhaps a more suitable explanation for the early usage of this site resides is the fact that the road from Otsego Lake to the river terminated near Fort Plank.<sup>(34)</sup>

*. . . on the 20th, they made excursion upon another settlement, called the Coile, (lying on the road from Fort Plank to Lake Otsego . . .*

A review of contemporary maps of the era, show that only one led road from the Mohawk River to Lake Otsego and that it wasn't until after Clinton's Expedition of 1779,<sup>(35)</sup> that one could reach Lake Otsego from any road other than the one originating from near [the mouth of the Otsquago Creek](#) .<sup>(36)</sup>

Yes, there was certainly a road southward to Springfield Landing at the head of Otsego Lake from the Canajohary settlement **near** the mouth of the Otsquago Creek. Aerial views and early maps suggest to me that the road diverted from the south shore highway (now NY Rte 5-S) at the ravine between Sand Hill and Fort Hill, close to the current access road to the Fort Plain Museum. The old road continued west through that ravine until it met what is now known as the “Pickle Hill Road” (Montgomery County Hwy 69), and continued along that route to present-day Hallsville. It is probably significant that this very route shows as a narrow un-allotted corridor on 18<sup>th</sup> century Bleeker Patent Maps. (It is the same lot that the Lipes eventually purchased as a “mill lot”) At Hallsville the road continued along the current NY State Rte 80, at least as far as Starkville; beyond that I have not attempted to trace the route. The old roadbed is still quite obvious along the northern part of Expense Lot B, and it is maintained and marked with interpretive signage by The Fort Plain Museum.

A second early road now called “Leneker Road” ran south from near the Paris Road site of Fort Plank, connecting it to what is now known as “Pickle Hill Road” as well. –W.L.

[Another critically important road ran from near Fort Plank to the Oneida's Castle at Kananwalohare](#)<sup>(37)</sup> in modern Lenox Township, Oneida County, New York.<sup>(38)</sup> Thus, the Fort could be easily used as a layover for both military and civilian goods being transported to and from distant settlements such as the Kyle, Springfield, Cooperstown<sup>(39)</sup>, and Stone Arabia. And, as center for the gathering of information on the movements of the enemy in the west.<sup>(40)</sup>

The south shore highway to German Flats, Fort Stanwix and the Oneida homeland ran west, generally along the same route as modern NY Rte 5-S. It is interesting to note that the highway swings inland away from the river at Sand Hill and doesn't return to the riverside until it reaches the Canajoharie or Upper Mohawk Castle site near present-day Indian Castle. There is evidence that the earliest Indian trail followed this same route, as Myndert Van den Bogaert mentions traveling over these highlands during his trip through the area in 1635/6.

The Paris Road site of Fort Plank is located along this inland stretch of the south shore highway two miles from the Mohawk River, and only a few hundred yards from the highway. Since most civilian and military goods traveled by water during the spring,



summer and fall months, Fort Plank was *not* a convenient layover point for most of the year - a fact that probably has a great deal to do with why Fort Plain/Fort Rensselaer became the more important installation after 1780. Goods unloaded at Walrath's Ferry had to be transported two miles up the highway to reach the Paris Road Fort Plank site, but only a few hundred yards up the hill to Fort Plain on the Adam and Johannes Lipe, Sr. farms. -W.L.

Another clue as to the fort's site resides in the locating of [Johannes Walradt's Ferry](#) .<sup>(41)</sup>

*We the Supervisors of Tryon County do hereby certify that the Place of John Walrad is very convenient to be an establish'd Ferry, and at this Time highly necessary to preserve a Communication between Forts Plank and Paris, and do hereby recommend the said John Walrad to his Excellency Governor Clinton, for a License for a Ferry across the Mohock River. Given under our Hands the 6<sup>th</sup> Day of April 1780.*

*Jelles Fonda, Chris'r P. Yates, John Pickerd, Augustinus Hess, Henrick Staring.*

Again – see the topographic map with the ferry site marked. The reason that this document mentions Fort Plank (and not Fort Plain) is because it was drafted early in 1780, before Fort Plain was strengthened **and** before General Van Rensselaer, Colonel Malcolm and Lt. Colonel Dubois made it their regional headquarters. We know that Fort Plain was already built, but we don't even know for certain that it had a name in the spring of 1780. At the time this document was drawn up, Fort Plank was the larger and more important installation, but by the fall of 1780 that all changed.

Note that *neither* Fort Plank nor Fort Paris (the two military installations mentioned in this document) was contiguous to the river or Walrath's Ferry. Fort Paris lay 5½ miles inland to the east, and the Fort Plank Paris Road site is 2 miles inland to the west. So if Johnson is suggesting that this document somehow proves Fort Plank was contiguous to the ferry, he is absolutely mistaken. We know Fort Paris wasn't, yet the document mentions it in the same context as Fort Plank. -W.L.

John M. Dake, stated in 1832, that Walrad's ferry was located nearly opposite the fort. Thus, it becomes imperative to positively identify the site of this ferry.<sup>(42)</sup> Fortunately, Wright's 1803 Survey of the Mohawk River shows that the ferry was located very near the southern tip of Abeel's Island and thus nearly opposite the foot of Sand Hill, on Lot 4 of [the Francis Harrison Patent](#) . The Survey also represents the Reformed German Church of Canajoharie to be nearly dead west of the ferry site. These facts further support the idea that Fort Plank was located upon Expense Lot "A" of the Rutger Bleeker Patent.

While he doesn't mention that it was Walrath's Ferry by name this is exactly what John M. Dake's (S19272) pension record says: "he was one of sixteen men who were stationed as a guard at the ferry opposite to **Fort Plain**."

So, once again Johnson has used his *a priori* assumption and knowingly altered the meaning of a documentary source from **Fort Plain** to **Fort Plank**. What does upset me somewhat is the fact that this particular pension record makes it crystal clear that the applicant believed Fort Plank and Fort Plain were two different forts, as he says in one



place he was “quartered the second winter [1782-83] at **Fort Plank** about 3 or 4 miles from **Fort Plain**.” An amended deposition by John M. Dake dated 1/9/1834 reads as follows: “In the month of November 1782 a part of the companies went to **Fort Plain** and a part to **Fort Plank** for winter quarters. That in the course of the winter they were ordered to change places. Those that were at **Fort Plank** were ordered to **Fort Plain**.” This leaves no room for doubt that Dake thought he was at two separate fortifications 3-4 miles apart, one called **Fort Plain** and one named **Fort Plank**. How could anyone come away from that with a different understanding? Yet, Johnson actually cites this pension record as evidence that “the fort” – meaning his hypothetical **Fort Plank/Fort Plain** was “nearly opposite” Walrath’s Ferry. Given all of this it is difficult not to conclude that Johnson is deliberately engaging in willful deception. Why would he do that?

Johannes Walrath did live on lot #4 of the Harrison Patent and early 19<sup>th</sup> century maps show that lot just beyond the northern boundary of the Village of Nelliston. The large square two-story limestone home on the west side of Rte 5 which was in recent years a Bed and Breakfast called “The Historian” was built on the turnpike (Rte 5) in 1842 by Charles Walrath to replace the older family home which was located on the floodplain adjacent to the King’s Highway (now the CSX railroad tracks). (see Ruth V. Lupo, *Waymarks in Nelliston, New York*, 1976, 38) Rufus Grider visited the old Walrath house while it was still standing in 1887. He noted that “it is on the N. bank of the Mohawk about one mile west of Fort Plain [*the site is actually .72 mile north or upriver from the intersection of Canal and Main Streets*]. Here was the oldest ferry of these parts. In Walrod’s time a female negro slave attended to it for him. The house was first kept by an older Walrath [Johannes, Sr] who was descended by his son John, who was a blacksmith by trade. His shop stood near the lower edge of this picture, now occupied by the tracks of the NY Central R.R. In John’s time he carried on his trade & tavern also.” In 1964 Paul Huey, Tom Bollen and I found a number of plain limestone markers along the northern fence-line of this lot which we speculated may have marked the graves of Walrath’s African-American slaves. The same fence-line can be seen beyond the barn in Grider’s view.



An article published on December 26, 1837 notes that the Fort Plain Blockhouse (built at Fort Plank in 1779) was used as a storehouse for military supplies for several years after the Revolutionary War. <sup>(43)</sup> Built at Fort Plank in 1779 ??? –W.L. Further evidence of

the site's usage in later years as a military depot is found in a land deed between Jacob Abeel, Jr. and the People of New York which transfers 375 square feet of land on the south-side of the Dutchtown Road [emphasis mine (WL) this is the **original** 1772 church lot actually southwest of the road!], approximately one mile westward of the Village of Fort Plain, for use as a *Gun House* site.<sup>(44)</sup> Further confirming the Church Lot as the site of this gun house is Montgomery County Deeds 42:515, in which Peter Harder of Morristown Township, Saint Lawrence County, New York of the first part and the Trustees of Fort Plain Village in the County of Montgomery, New York of the second part for 10.00 transfers:

*. . . All that certain piece or parcell of Land situate in Minden and County last aforesaid about one mile northwesterly of the Village aforesaid and is known as the Fort Plain Burial Ground in Former Times is situated at or near and was connected with the old Fort Plain Church for many years before it was pulled down, the parcel now conveyed containing about three or four acres, also a Road or communication to and from it from at or near the site of said old church which said Road and parcel of Land were reserved in deeds of this grantor to Jacob Abeel Ju<sup>r</sup> and John J. Lipe and this grant is made Explicitly to said Corporation and their assigns as a cemetery or burial ground. . . .*

Fort Rensselaer/Fort Plain was utilized as an armory by the federal government from 1784 through 1799. Not surprisingly, all of the official records refer to the post as Fort Rensselaer or some phonetic variant.

General Henry Knox became Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army after Washington retired at the end of 1783. In 1785 Knox became the very first United States Secretary of War. He visited the Mohawk Valley with General Washington in August of 1783, so he was very familiar with the strategic advantages, strengths and weaknesses of the various frontier fortifications. He chose to utilize the detached blockhouse at Fort Rensselaer/Fort Plain. It was the most recently completed fortification in the area and it was designed by a trained French military engineer – Jean de Villefranch, the same man who had designed many of the fortifications at West Point.

The location of this blockhouse is known beyond any doubt to have been located on the lands of Johannes Lipe, Sr. The government paid \$34.50 annual rent to “Johannis Leip, Sr” and several of those rent certification documents are extant (see for example William Simmons to James McHenry, 3/31/1796 certification from 3/4/1795 to 1/1/1796, War Dept Acct. Records Bk, USNA RG 217) The actual blockhouse site was archaeologically excavated between 1961 and 1963 and the architectural details are in agreement with a 1783 sketch of the structure discovered at the American Antiquarian Society Library. There is no *reasonable* cause to doubt the identity and location of this blockhouse.

The main fort on Adam Lipe’s property was apparently destroyed before August 25, 1790, for on that date a visitor reported that he arrived “at the village called Fort plain, which is composed of but a few homes and a Church, and inhabited by Germans ... The Fort which gave name to the site is entirely destroyed, and there is also difficulty to-day to discover its plan. It was built with earth, and its situation was advantageous to command the navigation of the river.” (Andreani, Paolo, *Along the Hudson and*

*Mohawk ...*, 2006, 51).

In February of 1798 the Fort Rensselaer storekeeper, Bernard Hudson, was ordered to sell the tools and arms unfit for use and ship the serviceable small arms and military stores to the nearest permanent federal post. Hudson failed to carry out these orders and the following January he was ordered to abandon the blockhouse at Fort Rensselaer altogether. If the ordnance and small arms could not be transported due to the season, they were to be “placed under care of some trusty resident there... A small log building or shed should be erected to cover them from the weather, which being furnished by the person in charge of the stores will, for its rent and trouble entitle him to five dollars a month.” (S. Hodgdon to B. Hudson 2/14/1798 & 1/25/1799, Samuel Hodgdon Letterbook, 1798-99, U.S. Library of Congress). I believe that these final instructions account for the “Gun House” that Johnson mentions he found evidence of in a 19<sup>th</sup> century deed. It was apparently built on Expense Lot A of the Bleeker Patent, but not until 1799 or 1800, so it has nothing to do with the Revolutionary War location of Fort Plain, Fort Plank or Fort Rensselaer.

A letter written by Garret Abeel, a cousin of John Abeel, also gives us a clue as to Fort Plank being upon Expense Lot "A" of the Bleeker Patent. In his letter to his wife, Mary, Abeel states that his Cos<sup>n</sup> Abeel's house is located, but a single stone's throw from the tavern of William Seeber.<sup>(45)</sup> It thus comes as no surprise that the officers who were to sit as witnesses and Judges against Captain Daniel Lane at his Fort Plank Court Martial should be summoned to Seeber's Tavern to rendezvous.<sup>(46)</sup>  
*After orders January 26. 1779*

*Cap<sup>t</sup> Daives*  
*Cap<sup>t</sup> Titus*  
*Lieut Dunscomb*  
*Lieut Gray*  
*Lieut Hunt*  
*Lieut Barret*  
*Lieut V. Hovanburgh*

*To be to Morrow morning at Eleven oClock at Seabers Tavarn to a Gen<sup>l</sup> Court martial If there is any Brimston wonting in the Regiment they may apply to the Docter*

*The Court which is warned to Set to Morrow Morning at Eleven OClock in the Fort and the officers are Desired to attend*

Just as the location of Fort Plank has been accurately preserved in local tradition, so has the location of William Seeber's store and tavern. The building was stone and although it was burned in the 1780 Canajohary Raid, Simms notes that the stone shell was refurbished after the war and it continued to be used as a Lipe residence well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The building which Simms identified stood at the top of Sand Hill, somewhat north of the church and on the east side of the south shore highway. It was located at the southeastern corner of Woodlot # 4 - exactly 2.11 miles east of the Paris Road Fort Plank site. I have no idea why the abovementioned Court Martial proceedings were held that far east from Fort Plank, but I do know that part of the Fourth New York Regiment was

stationed at Fort Paris in early 1779. If some of the Court Officers or defendants were coming from that post, perhaps they wanted to hold the proceedings at an intermediate location, closer to Walrath's Ferry. Then again, maybe they just wanted to be nearer to an open bar!

June 7, 1832, the United States Government passed into law an act authorizing lifetime pensions to any individual who could prove a total of at least six months of military service during war.<sup>(47)</sup> Due to the loss of many crucial Revolutionary War Records in the War of 1812, and the attrition of other critical papers which were considered the sole property of the individual officers who produced them, it became necessary for each and every person applying for benefits to carefully review his memory and attest to the facts of his service under oath in an open court. Witnesses were also required to verify the facts presented by the deponents in their sworn accounts. This alone created a vast, but often untapped, bank of raw data from which it is possible to reconstruct the day-to-day events of the Revolutionary War. Well over two hundred and fifty soldiers who had served at Forts Plank and/or Plain applied for benefits under this program. Of these men, six specifically state in the course of their sworn depositions that what they knew to be Fort Plank was now known as Fort Plain.<sup>(48)</sup> In addition to these statements, William Berry swore that while engaged in the company of Captain Garret Putman they were marched in mid July 1780 to Fort Plank (then so called) and performed duties there until sometime in September of 1780.<sup>(49)</sup> William Snook stated that in early August of 1777 his company, while marching en route to the Battle of Oriskany, rendezvoused at Fort Plank, a little above the place now called Fort Plain.<sup>(50)</sup> Henry J. Diefendorf, states that he was generally stationed in the years 1776 and 1777 at Fort Plank, but when the new fort, Fort Plain, was built in 1778 he then served in Fort Plain and was from there marched to the assistance of the survivors of the Cherry Valley Massacre under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Clyde.<sup>(51)</sup> And, last, Jacob J. Failing states in his sworn deposition of March 12, 1833 that on May 2, 1781 he began service *at Fort-Plain then called commonly Fort Plain.*<sup>(52)</sup>

I believe I have already explained why someone in the 1830s or 40s might say that the location of **Fort Plank**, which no longer existed, was “now known as **Fort Plain**,” which was a postal village *still* in existence. Further, from 1832 right up to the present, the Fort Plank site carries a Fort Plain postal address. Now that may not seem so important today, but in the 19<sup>th</sup> century dispersed farming communities were identified by their Post Office. Even more telling, by Johnson's admission *only* six or 2.5% of the 250+ applicants who mention serving at either **Fort Plain** or **Fort Plank** bothered to note that *current* address.

Here are the exact excerpts from the six pension records:

Geradus Clute (S23160) – Fall 1778 marched to “Fort Plank now called Fort Plain” under Albany Militia Colonel Gordon.

Peter Conrad (W16543) – October 1779 “marched under Capt. Garret Putman to Fort Plank (now called Fort Plain)”

Peter Walrath (S14792) – Spring 1781 was pressed with his horses to carry provisions to Fort Stanwix “from Fort Plank otherwise called Fort Plain”. 1781 – “Col. Willett commanded at Fort Plank or Fort Plain as it is now called.”



Jesse Stewart (S23014) – supporting deposition from Martin Keller who served in Col Brown’s Massachusetts Levies with Stewart. He says in July 1780 they marched from “Schenectady to Fort Plank then so called now Fort Plane.”

Moses Stewart (S11461) – supporting deposition from Jesse Stewart who served in the same company in Brown’s Massachusetts Levies. 1780 marched from “Schenectady to Fort Plank then so-called now Fort Plane”.

William Van Slyck (W2461) – Fall 1777 he served in Van Evera’s Militia Company at “Fort Ehle ... situate in the Town of Canajoharie aforesaid on the south side of the Mohawk River about four miles below Fort Plank (now called Fort Plain).”

Clute’s and Van Slyck’s service occurred before Fort Plain was built and the Stewarts were both from out of the area in Massachusetts, so their confusion is understandable. Only Walrath and Conrad were both local and referring to service that occurred during the era when **both** Fort Plank (built Spring 1778) **and** Fort Plain (built Spring 1779) were in service. Please note that both of their references clearly say “*now called*” Fort Plain, *now* being 1833 in both cases.

Additionally suggestive of the Fort Plank and Fort Plain being one and the same is Jeremiah Van Rensselaer's drawing of Expense Lot "A" of the Bleeker Patent which shows [a small diamond](#) along on the western boundary of the aforesaid lot.<sup>(53)</sup> What is even more significant is the fact that this diamond shaped area was still visible on a satellite photo from April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1997, [actually 1998 –WL] and can be viewed and downloaded at no cost from [www.terraserver-usa.com](http://www.terraserver-usa.com)



By itself, the diamond marking shown on Van Rensselaer's sketch seems innocuous. However, a letter from Major [Powell] of the British Army bemoans the difficulty of

protecting a fort he is currently fortifying. Accompanying his letter is [a sketch of the works at Osewgo](#) of which he speaks and shown on it is a nearly identical diamond [a redoubt] lying within a L-shaped earthwork [a redan] designating the location of their fortress' out-lying defenses on the western shore of the Oswego River.<sup>(54)</sup>

Note this is the satellite view that Johnson references in the paragraph above. Some depressions are certainly evident in the photo. It's not clear that they form a diamond shape as he suggests, and I am quite certain that the site falls within the unnumbered 25-acre home lot owned by Jost Lipe east of Woodlot #3, not Expense Lot A as Johnson reports. (see the W.L. version of the Bleeker Patent overlay illustrated above)

Positive proof of another fort in the area of modern day Fort Plain Village is found in the following statement.<sup>(55)</sup>

*That about the last of June [1777] following I was again Called into Service by my Said officer and marched to Sharon in the County of Schoharie for the purpose of detecting and Securing a number of Tories that we took & brought over to the Mohawk River about thirty of them, Confined them in a Stone house near where Fort Plain was afterwards built . . .*

The “stone house *near* where Fort Plain was afterwards built” was either the stone home of Casper Lipe on the northern part of Homelot #2 or John Abeel's stone home on adjacent Homelot #1. In 1780 a petition from the Freeholders of Tryon County requested that the State Legislature establish Abeel's house at Conajohary as the county court house because of its more central location than Johnstown. ([Votes and Proceedings of the Senate of the State of New York at Their Third Session Held at Kingston, Ulster County Commencing August 24, 1779](#), Fishkill: Samuel Loudon, 1780, p. 77) Casper Lipe's stone house was 225 yards from the Expense Lot B site of Fort Plain and Abeel's was 450 yards. I believe either would qualify as “*near*” the traditional location of Fort Plain. So, how does the proximity of a stone house provide “positive proof” that **Fort Plain** was located somewhere else? –W.L.

In the **spring of 1779**, members of the Tryon County Militia under the immediate command of Captain Jacob Diefendorf, along with the company of Captain Abraham Coapman, and Continentals under the command of **Lieutenant Colonel Pierre Regnier de Roussi** marched to a site approximately two miles south of Fort Plank, where one Mister Egences was planning and constructing a fort at Fort Plain.<sup>(56)</sup> Evidence of this activity is also located in the Orderly Books of the Fourth New York Regiment<sup>(57)</sup> and in various other pension depositions.<sup>(58)</sup> However, only the pension file of Joseph Degolyer gives a name to the newly constructed blockhouse: Fort Plain. It is thus clear that for the soldiers of Fort Plank to have assisted in the building of a *new* fort, **Fort Plain**, it could not have been then or now, the place called by Campbell and Stone, Fort Plain

The actual Henry Murphy (W18543) pension record states that in the late spring or **early July of 1780**, Murphy “was ordered out with his arms and accouterments by General Orders. Claimant well recollects that during the whole season from Spring until late in the Fall he saw those Commandants [Col. Dubois, Col. Clyde, Col. Brown; (Genl. Van Rensselaer is crossed out in the manuscript)] within that time at **Fort Plain**, but who it



was that had the command at the time ... claimant doth not know, but claimant believes there was an E[n]geneer planning and constructing **Fort Plain**. During the course of [the summer] claimant was constraint [ie *constrained*] in aiding and assisting in erecting said fort, and that claimant did at that time consider himself in actual employ in the service of the United States, and always to the present day did consider it the same, and that he had served faithfully for 1 month.”

So, there is nothing in the actual record about Lt Col Regnier, nor marching “two miles south of Fort Plank”. In fact, Murphy says this activity took place in the late spring and summer of 1780, not 1779 as Johnson claimed. Moreover, Murphy’s date is borne-out by the mention of Colonel Dubois and Col. Brown who were at Fort Plain in August and September of 1780, but not in the area in 1779. Murphy simply states he was called out to **Fort Plain** where “he believed” there was an engineer (not a “Mr. Egincés” as Johnson misread it), and that he was put to work for a month in building **Fort Plain**. This is during the period that Van Rensselaer, Malcolm and Dubois were rebuilding and strengthening the “temporary fortification”, so that it would be a suitable military headquarters.

The reference in Joseph Degolyer’s pension record (S12744) does date a little more than year earlier in the Winter and Spring of 1779. He says that while he was serving in the militia, garrisoning **Fort Plank** “three miles south of the Mohawk River... A body of men came on & built **Fort Plain**, about three miles north of Fort Plank on the Mohawk River.” As I have explained elsewhere (Lenig, 2009), the body of troops that Degolyer was referring to was the Fourth New York Regiment, and as Johnson mentions above they were involved in the initial construction of **Fort Plain**. Please note that Degolyer locates **Fort Plank** “three miles south of the Mohawk River” – a description which fits the Paris Road site, but would not describe Johnson’s hypothetical locus as it is only a few hundred yards from the river.

What is clear is that Johnson has mixed two separate episodes of construction at **Fort Plain**; the first temporary fortification, built as a refuge for the Canajohary inhabitants by the Fourth New York Regiment in the Winter and Spring of 1779, and the enlargement and strengthening of the fortifications which took place a little over one year later under the direction of Gen. Van Rensselaer, Colonel Dubois and Colonel Malcolm.

The other pensioners that Johnson has cited in his footnotes (Frederick Bronner, Christopher and Peter Eckler and Jacob Garlock) were all residents of the Chyle and Squauk settlements in southern Herkimer County. They abandoned that exposed frontier in the Spring of 1778 and moved to Dutchtown where they assisted in building a neighborhood refuge named **Fort Plank**. They continued to reside and serve in the militia garrisoning Fort Plank until the end of the war, but none of these men’s pension applications mention **Fort Plain** or any other fort building activity after working on **Fort Plank** in the Spring and Summer of 1778.

I don’t understand Johnson’s last sentence in the above paragraph, but I suspect his *a priori* assumptions are once again affecting clear reasoning. If one begins by assuming that Stone’s 1838 blockhouse description of “Fort Plank” is gospel, it might be possible to come to this conclusion. For my part, I think it is very clear that **both** the 1779 and 1780 building episodes at “**Fort Plain**” refer to the fortifications on Adam and Johannes

Lipe, Sr.'s Expense Lot B lands. It is not clear from the sources quoted whether a blockhouse was built during either of these construction episodes.

In Jephtha R. Simms' *The Frontiersman of New York*, it is stated that Fort Plain was renamed Fort Rensselaer <sup>(59)</sup> by General Robert Van Rensselaer who desired to memorialize himself. <sup>(60)</sup> Yet, Simms in his own personal copy of *Frontiersman*, hand wrote in a margin: *Where was this fort located?* <sup>(61)</sup>

This statement is *almost* correct. According to Frey, Simms made that annotation in his personal copy of Campbell's *Annals of Tryon County*. Since Campbell's book was published in 1831, Simms had 50 years to answer his own question, and he obviously did as is evidenced by what he wrote in *Frontiersman*. Not every researcher locks onto an idea and refuses to accept or weigh the evidence. Some have an open mind, and change their interpretation throughout their life based on new evidence. Think about it!

In a footnote Johnson quotes a primary source that mention "pickets" at Fort Renssealer and makes a knowing statement that it must have been "a piquet fort". Well, I'm not sure what that means. Earthen forts, horizontal log forts and vertically palisaded forts could all have lines of vertical or oblique pickets outside the main walls, so to say a fort had pickets doesn't really describe its construction.

Evidence that Fort Rensselaer was also known by other names is substantiated by the Orderly Book of William Scott:

*Garrison Saratoga Oct<sup>r</sup> 26<sup>th</sup> 1782*

*Parole Via [unreadable] Viominel C Sign Burdow  
Nantes*

*Extract from Lord Sterlings orders dated Head Quarters Albany Oct<sup>r</sup> 22<sup>d</sup> 1782*

*Some confusion and inconveniencies have arrisen from Some of our posts being called by a verietiy of Names particular<sup>y</sup> at Canajohary where the fort and works originally called Fort Ranselair and has by Some Since ben called Fort Plain - in order such inconvenience ~~in~~ for the future that post with its appendagesis by all persons belonging to the army within this department and all those opperating with it either in the Military or civil Branches in all their Reports Returns and letters on business to be called Fort Ranseleir and no other \_\_\_\_\_*

That's right! The first *official* name for the fort was Fort Renssealaer. It *may* have been known locally as *Fort Plain* before the summer of 1780, but from Lord Sterling's point of view that would not count.

But, equally confusing is a September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1780, accounting of the Fort Plank Massacre taken from Almon's *Remembrancer* which proves that the area surrounding Fort Plank at Canajoharie was renamed, Fort Rensselaer, shortly after the August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1780 Raid:

*The following account may be depended upon - At the fort now called fort Ransalaer Sir*

*John Johnson and Captain Brant have burnt 51 houses 42 barns killed 17 [and have taken] 52 prisoners*

Come on! What's confusing about this? The *Remembrancer* article doesn't even mention Fort Plank! It is Johnson who has provocatively dubbed this "the Fort Plank Massacre." The traditionally accepted locations of Fort Plank and Fort Plain/Fort Rensselaer were less than three miles apart, and all of the contemporary descriptions of Brant's Raid indicate that the Indians came from the Kleiburg, about three miles northwest of the Paris Road Fort Plank site, and continued burning until they reached John Abeel's house, a few hundred yards from the Expense Lot B location of Fort Rensselaer/Fort Plain. So the raid took place over five or six miles around **both** forts. Please note that the *Remembrancer* account uses the modifier "**now** called Fort Ransalaer" implying that it might have been called something else previously. Also note that this took place on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1780 - just after Henry Murphy's pension record tells us there was a major rebuilding project going on at "**Fort Plain**"; and just after July - when General Van Rensselaer assumed the general command in Tryon County. All of these little "coincidences" coming together sure seem to fit what Simms wrote about Van Rensselaer renaming Fort Plain. The only thing we are missing is a contemporary source that clearly indicates the fort was called "**Fort Plain**" prior to the summer of 1780. There are pension records that suggest it, but we really need a contemporary document that proves the name was in general use prior to August of 1780. – W.L.

We know from the letters of Catherine (Van Schaick) Gansevoort to Colonel Peter Gansevoort,<sup>(62)</sup> Colonel Abraham Wemple to General Abraham Ten Broeck,<sup>(63)</sup> Colonel Samuel Clyde to Governor George Clinton,<sup>(64)</sup> and Guy Johnson to General Frederick Haldimand;<sup>(65)</sup> that it was **Fort Plank** and its surrounding settlements, **not** Fort Rensselaer, which were attacked on August<sup>nd</sup>, 1780.

Again, this statement is based on negative evidence and a false dichotomy. The raid didn't *have* to take place around one fort *or* the other; it could (*and did*) take place around both forts. None of the cited documents mention Fort Rensselaer, but Thomas Sammons narrative and several pension records state that both Fort Plain and Fort Plank were within the ravaged area. Even Abraham Wemple mentions a little unnamed fort near John Abeel's house that he found "full of sorrowful women and children" on the day of the raid. Surely that was the fort on Expense Lot B, the fort that came to be Fort Plain and Fort Rensselaer.

If you accept for a moment the possibility that Fort Plank and Fort Plain were separate entities located two to three miles apart, and that Fort Rensselaer was another name for Fort Plain, then it would be fair to say that the area around Fort Plain/Fort Rensselaer **and** Fort Plank was attacked on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1780. That is what Simms, Lossing, Greene and many other researchers have said and there is nothing in any of the cited documents that rules that out. In fact there is a great deal to support it. –W.L.

The Papers of Colonel William Malcom, who was ordered to secure operations in the Mohawk Valley by General Washington, show that Fort Rensselaer was, at the time of his arrival there, incapable of housing troops or supplies through a winter.

*Dear Governor Fort Ranselaer Sep<sup>r</sup> 25 1780*

*. . . am adding something to the expense of this little fort -- it the only thing that Keeps the inhabitants dry & there must be something to cover a few troops in Winter and to hold their provisions -- a few boards /which we impress/ & nails is all the charge -- . . .*

This brings one to the conclusion that Fort Plank and Fort Rensselaer were not one and the same. This seems to make the true identity and location of Fort Rensselaer a mystery also. <sup>(66)</sup>

It would only be a mystery if “one” made the *a priori* assumption that Fort Plain and Fort Plank was the same fort. If Fort Plain was **not** Fort Plank (as most researchers have concluded), then Fort Plain **could** be “the true identity and location of Fort Rensselaer” as most researchers have also concluded. At least we agree that Fort Plank was never known as Fort Rensselaer. That’s a start! –W.L.

While Fort Plank was thought to have stood on or near the Bleeker Patent Church Lot; another fort, which would later be known by Revolutionary War Pensioners as Fort Plain, was built near . . . *where the Otsquago Creek empties into the Mohawk River*. <sup>(67)</sup> This leads one to question: Where did the Otsquago Creek empty into the Mohawk River? Nelson Greene, the author of several area histories, states that prior to the construction of the Erie Canal, the course of the Otsquago Creek made a gross deviation in course and flowed northerly for more than a mile to empty into the river at the base of what is now known as Cemetery Hill and just to the east of the Fort Plain Museum. <sup>(68)</sup> Douglas Ayres, a local historian and retired teacher, when confronted with the idea that the creek's course had not been grossly altered, stated: <sup>(69)</sup>

*The creek flowed northeast across the following streets: South, Division, Mohawk, Washington, Centre, Home, Prospect and Orchard then towards Herkimer St., who's west end was near the canal, entering the river near Lock 15. Course was roughly NE from the junction of Highway's 80 & 163 to Lock 15. The creek was straightened and moved so that a dam would allow the canal boats to cross. About 1841, an aqueduct was built. The creek was moved so that only one bridge would be needed across the creek.*

However, a close and careful examination of contemporary maps and deeds indicates the location of the creek's mouth was not grossly altered by the building of the canal, as previously believed, but remains at or near its pre-Revolutionary War site. <sup>(70)</sup> Thus, the fort referred to as Fort Plain in many pension applications cannot be the same blockhouse shown in William L. Stone's sketch of Fort Plank or referred to in Lossing's Pictorial Field Book of the American Revolution , as Fort Plain.

A possible name for this other fortification, which does not makes its debut in Revolutionary War documents until September 4, 1780, is Fort Rensselaer. <sup>(71)</sup> The flood of refugees into Fort Plank after Brant's 1780 raid made it quite likely that General Van Rensselaer desired another, less crowded, location for his Mohawk Valley Headquarters.

No one other than Ken Johnson has suggested that **Fort Plank** stood on or near the Bleeker Patent Church lot. This statement infers that his hypothesis is a generally



accepted fact - possibly a tad overstated! As we have seen Lossing, Simms, Frothingham, and Greene all placed Fort Plank at the Paris Road site. In my opinion Campbell really never addressed the location and Stone placed it on the Expense Lot B Lipe farm location, as he confused Fort Plank with Fort Plain. No one other than Ken Johnson placed Fort Plank “on or near the Bleeker Patent Church lot.”

The sole authority cited for the statement that there was “another fort ... later known as Fort Plain ... built near “where the Otsquago Creek empties into the Mohawk River” is the pension record of Lieutenant Abraham D. Quackenboss (W16688). This case really illustrates why researchers have to be critical of pension record information and not accept what is written in them at face value.

Lt. Abraham D. Quackenbush unfortunately died in a house fire in 1812 - long before the federal pension laws were passed. However, in 1836 his widow decided that she would apply for benefits as a surviving spouse. Since Lt. Quackenbush was dead, she had to find other men who could testify in detail to Lt. Quackenbush’s service. Two of the men she found were the Covenhoven brothers, Abraham and Isaac, who claimed to have served under Lt. Quackenbush in 1775, 1776 and 1777 before returning to live in their native New Jersey for the rest of the war years.

Abraham Covenhoven claimed that in the Spring of 1775 he marched under Capt. Jacob Gardinier and Lt. Abraham D. Quackenbush “to Fort Plain at the mouth of Otsquago Creek on the Mohawk River and from there to Fort Dayton at which he served the full term of one month.” Of course, by all accounts including Ken Johnson’s there was no Fort Plain in the Spring of 1775. Covenhoven could have meant that he was at the place where the *Village of Fort Plain* would later be established “at the mouth of the Otsquago Creek.” Then again - there was no Fort Dayton in the Spring of 1775 either. To compound the problem, he continues by testifying that he served again at Fort Plain in the Fall of 1775 and in 1776, at least three years before Fort Plain was a twinkle in anyone’s eye. His brother Isaac testified to essentially the same service, but mercifully failed to locate Fort Plain. It is clear that these two were simply making up stories to support Mrs. Quackenbush’s claim, but this is the ultimate and sole authority for Johnson’s statement that “another Fort Plain” was “built near . . . *where the Otsquago Creek empties into the Mohawk River.*”

What I find as *really odd* is that Johnson is not willing to entertain that the well-identified **Fort Plain** on the Lipe farms *might* have had its official name changed to **Fort Rensselaer**, yet he readily suggests that this totally fictional fort at the mouth of the Otsquago Creek “known by Revolutionary War Pensioners as Fort Plain,” might be the true location of **Fort Rensselaer**. I see, so Fort Plain and Fort Rensselaer *could* be the same fort, but only if it was Johnson’s mythical Fort Plain. That makes a lot of sense!

Oddly enough, I agree with Johnson that by and large the mouth and lower portion of the Otsquago Creek **have not** changed in over 250 years – and that scares me! However, unlike Mr. Johnson, I do not believe that we can take these locating descriptions quite so literally. The traditional Expense Lot B site of **Fort Plain/Fort Rensselaer** that Lossing, Simms *et al* have identified is only a half-mile north of the current mouth of the Otsquago Creek. To me that is close enough that some people might call it “at the mouth.” If

Johnson is advocating his Bleeker Patent Lowland Lot # 9 theory for this fictional fort, he must agree, because the closest point on lot #9 is not at the mouth of the creek either. In fact it is the same distance in the opposite direction (one-half mile south) from the mouth of the creek. –W.L.

Simms, in his Frontiersman of New York , provides only a cursory clue to the location of this second fort. <sup>(72)</sup>

*An Interesting Paper Disclosing a Secret.--Since the above was written,the following document preserved among the papers of the late William H. Seeber, has come to my observation:*

*"By virtue of the appointment of his Excellency, George Clinton, Esq.,Governor of the State of the New York, etc., etc.*

*"We do hereby in pursuance of an act entitled an act to amend an act, entitled an act to accommodate the inhabitants of the frontiers with habitations and other purposes therein mentioned, passed the 22d day of March, 1781 -- Grant unto William Seeber, Peter Adame, George Garlock and Henry Smith, license and liberty to cut and remove wood or timber from the lands of John Laib (or Lail) [LIPE], George Kraus, John Fatterle, John Plaikert, Wellem (William) Fenck, George Ekar, John Walrath, and Henry Walrath, lying contiguous to Fort Plain, being a place of defense, for fuel, fencing and timber for the use of the first above mentioned persons.*

*Given under our hands at Canajoharie this 8th day of November, 1782.*

*Christian Nellis,  
M. Willett, Commissioners*

*This instrument was drawn up in the hand-writing of Esq. Nellis, and taken to Col. Willett to sign. In the hand-writing of the latter and with the ink of his signature, he crossed off the word Plain and interlined the name Rensselaer. It seems surprising that Col. Willett, who so disapproved of changing the name of Fort Stanwix, should have connived at changing the name of Fort Plain; and it can only be accounted for by presuming that he was thereby courting the influence of wealth and position. <sup>(73)</sup> --*

Of the persons in the document quoted above: William Seeber lived upon Lot 6 of the [Arent Bradt-Philip Livingston Patent: "Freysbush"](#) ; <sup>(74)</sup> George Garlock lived upon Lot 3 of the Arent Bradt-Philip Livingston Patent; <sup>(75)</sup> [Hans] Henry Smith owned [Homestead Lot 10 of the 1730 Division of the Bleeker Patent, Lowland Lot 10 of the 1730 Division of the Bleeker Patent, & the Plumb Plain Lot of the 1730 Division of the Bleeker Patent](#) <sup>(76)</sup>, a portion of Lot 9 of the 1772 Division of the Bleeker Patent, & Lot 19 of the 1772 Division of the Bleeker Patent; <sup>(77)</sup> John [Johannes] Lipe, Sr. possessed Homestead Lot 2 of the 1730 Division of the Bleeker Patent, Lowland Lot 2 of the 1730 Division of the Bleeker Patent, 21 acres in Expense Lot B of the 1772 Division of the Bleeker Patent, & Lot 15 of the 1772 Division of the Bleeker Patent [all of which was left to him in his father Casper Lype's Will] <sup>(78)</sup> but lived upon Upper Woodland Lot 5 of the Bleeker Patent [his son Johannes J. lived there]; <sup>(79)</sup> George Kraus owned Homestead Lot 5 of the

1730 Division of the Bleeker Patent, Lowland Lot 5 of the 1730 Division of the Bleeker Patent, Lot 9 of the 1772 Division of Bleeker's Patent, & Lot 14 of the 1772 Division of Bleeker's Patent; <sup>(80)</sup> John Walrath owned part of Lot 20 of the 1742 Division of Bleeker's Patent; <sup>(81)</sup> Henry Walrath owned Lot 2 of the 1742 Division of the Bleeker Patent [and was burned out of his home on lot 9a of the Windecker Patent 8/2/1780] ; <sup>(82)</sup> John R. Bleeker owned Lot 18 of the 1772 Division of the Bleeker Patent; <sup>(83)</sup> and, John Bleeker [Plaikert in the above instrument] owned Lots 4, 7, 12, & 17 of the 1772 Division of the Bleeker Patent. <sup>(84)</sup> A careful review of the land holdings of the aforementioned individuals clearly points to a site east of the Plumb Plain Lot and somewhere in the neighborhood of Homestead Lot 8 which was owned by Adam Countryman, <sup>(85)</sup> a son-in-law of Caspar Lipe. <sup>(86)</sup> Collectively, this would seem to suggest that Fort Rensselaer was situated in the southern segment of the 1730 Division of the Bleeker Patent.

An undated and unpublished document in the Clinton Papers Manuscripts at the New York State Archives {Box 53, item 75} explains the above document:

*“Petition of Refugees living at Fort Rensselaer*

*Since the commencement of the war numbers of people have been driven from their homes by incursions of the enemy and are rendered destitute and were obliged to put up in one place or another for safety and refuge from the cruelty of the enemy. Whereas the constituents of Fort Rensselaer had for their own mutual benefit and for the encouragement of assistance agreed and consented that all manner of persons, refugees and others who would come and dwell with them in maintaining and keeping said fort, should during the war, have an equal privilege and advantage with them, who were proprietors of the ground, which also has been sufficiently proved since, which agreement prevailed upon several refugees to report thither, and have discharged all manner of military duty faithfully which was required of them, and some of them have for the most part of the time been in public service for the protection of the frontiers, and now the inhabitants and owners of the ground refuse them liberty of cutting firewood for their use, and have already sued for the same, and the agreement being proved and left to the verdict of a jury was found in favor of the defendants that they had the right to cut wood for their own private use, but notwithstanding all this they sued a second time, and the justices pleading the cause of the plaintiff like an attorney, without saying the least word on behalf of the defendants by which the suit was determined in favor of the plaintiff, and the defendants under a necessity at present to pay an exorbitant price for their firewood, if no remedy can be found to prevent it. As we have been informed that there is an Act passed in favor of such distressed persons as we are, and as we have no other application to or any hope of relief but to your Excellency, we therefore entreat you to take our grievances into consideration and grant us the benefit of an Act, and if there should be no such Act, then provide for other speedy remedy.*

*John Wohlgemuth, Jr  
Conrad Seeber  
Peter Adamy  
Jacob Myers  
Jacob Dorets  
Dewalt Dietrich*

*Peter Wastenmay  
William Seeber  
Lawrence Gros  
Henry W. Seeber  
Hendrik S. Morril  
Peter Lampford*

*Adam C [illegible]*

John Seeber  
Frederick Bellinger

William Hardy  
Christian Ehl

So all of these people had been burned or forced out of their homes before 1782 and were living as refugees at or near Fort Plain/Fort Rensselaer with no property or resources to provide their own wood for cooking and heating. Where they lived **before** they removed to the fort obviously has no relationship to the location of Fort Plain/Fort Rensselaer. – W.L.

Yet another important clue to the location of Fort Rensselaer are the words of Major Christopher P. Yates of the Canajoharie District: <sup>(87)</sup>

*Fort Rensselaer Oct<sup>r</sup> 21 1780*

*Dear Sir*

*I imbrace this first Moment of Leisure to acquaint you that we are all safe and have escaped the Burning -- . . .*

*The Night when the enemy laid at the Nose ~~14<sup>th</sup>~~ at 12 OClock I got my wife & ca. in a Waggon and bro<sup>t</sup> them here this Morning I sent her back --*

Fortunately we know where Major Yates lived during the war thanks to a Quit Rent Remission Certificate, which states that he lived upon lands in Lots 28 & 29 of the Arent Bradt-Livingston Patent (a.k.a. "The Freysbush Patent"). <sup>(88)</sup> To thus have traveled to the currently accepted site of Fort Rensselaer or Plain, Yates would have to have moved his family in the darkness nearly three miles and would have also had to have crossed the Otsquago Creek. It seems highly unlikely that the Major would have risked such an adventure with the enemy known to be lurking about the area.

Actually Yates had been “forced to quit” his Freysbush property in 1780 along with all of the other residents. That is why there quit rents were forgiven or “remitted”. –W.L.

**In his critique** of the first printing of the Bloodied Mohawk , Wayne Lenig states:

*. . . we know for certain that Fort Rensselaer was located on the Johannes Lipe Farm, currently owned by the Fort Plain Cemetery Association and the Fort Plain Museum. We know this because, once again, we have a copy of the property owner's bill to the state for damages incurred during the period that his property was confiscated for use: <sup>(89)</sup>*

The main point of my monograph was to present a synopsis of my own 40 years of research on **Fort Plain, Fort Plank, Fort Rensselaer and Canajoharie**, not a “critique” of Johnson’s book.

Mister Lenig then goes on to quote a document taken from the writings of Rufus Grider as proof of his contention that the fort site was owned by Lipe Family descendants: <sup>(90)</sup>

*Fort Rennselaer Augst 22, 1786.*



*State of New York ..... Dr. To John Lipe Senior*

*For Timber Building the Blockhouse, for fire Wood, Fencing and possession of the place by the Troops of the United States under the Command of Colonel Willett, One hundred & fifty Pounds, being the amount of my damages.*

*his  
John X Lipe  
Mark*

*Witness Present  
B. Hudson*

Lenig goes on to state that this proves that Fort Rensselaer was located near the "foot of Sand Hill", the site of the Reformed German Church of Canajoharie. However an examination of the surveyor's maps in the Rutger Bleeker Papers reveals that Mister Lipe's Farm could not have been located any where near the base of Sand Hill for several reasons:

1. John Lipe Senior's Claim for damages was rejected by both the State of New York and the United States House of Representatives.

So were many of the pension applications that Johnson has cited as gospel. Things get "rejected" by bureaucracies for a lot of different reasons. I would like to see Johnson's authority for this statement, and an explanation for the alleged rejection. No footnote seems to be provided. –W.L.

2. The line separating Lowland Lot 1 and Homestead Lot 1 of the Rutger Bleeker Patent two lots was formed by none other landmark than the eastern escarpment of the Sand Hill. These two lots are well known to have been in the possession of Johannes Abeel throughout the length of the American Revolution.

Almost correct; actually the Lowland Lots are on the floodplain, while the Homestead Lots are on the first *alluvial terrace* – a little shelf that provided 15'-20' of elevation protecting homes and barns from annual Spring flooding. The "Woodlots" are on the elevated tablelands; so strictly speaking the line formed at the junction of the Homestead Lots and Woodlots represents the bottom of the "escarpment". Abeel lived on Homestead Lot #1, but the next lot to the south (Homestead Lot #2) was owned by Casper Lipe until 1772, and his son Johannes Lipe, Sr. after his death. I think Lot #2 still qualifies as being at "the foot of Sand Hill." To say otherwise is really nitpicking.

3. All of the "Homestead Lots" of the Rutger Bleeker Patent were laid out upon lands **above the Mohawk River escarpment**. These lots included those of Johannes Abeel, Casper Lipe, and Adam Lipe. Casper Lipe upon Homestead and Lowland Lots 2 of the Bleeker Patent; Casper's son, Adam Lipe upon Homestead and Lowland Lots 3 of the Bleeker Patent; and Jacob Young upon Homestead and Lowland Lots 4 **along with their corresponding sections of Expense Lot "B"**. **Actually the Expense lot B lands were**

purchased separately and not necessarily by the adjacent lowland and homelot owner. The “Fort Hill” property in Expense lot B was purchased jointly by Casper and Adam Lipe in 1772 (see Albany County Deeds).

Mohawk River escarpment ??? I don’t think the Mohawk River qualifies as “a steep slope” or escarpment – the word Johnson was searching for is “floodplain”. The Bleeker Patent home lots were on the first alluvial terrace **above** the floodplain, while the Woodlots, most of “Expense Lot A”, and “Expense Lot B” were higher up on the tablelands. “Cemetery Hill” **and** “Fort Hill” are on “Expense Lot B” and “Sand Hill” is on “Expense Lot A”.

4. The Garret Y. Lansing Papers in the New York State Library at Albany, demonstrate that two Johannes Lipes were alive during the American Revolution. The first possessed 40 acres of land in Lowland Lot 2 [and Home Lot 2] of the 1730 Division of the Bleeker Patent, 70 acres of land in Lot 15 of the 1772 Division of the Bleeker Patent, 21 acres of land in Expense Lot B of the 1730 Division of the Bleeker Patent, and on 20 acres in Lot 10 of the 1772 Division all of which had once belonged during the war to his father, Casper.<sup>(93)</sup> But, during the American Revolution Johannes, per [his quit rent receipt](#) resided on the south-easternmost half of [Upper Woodland] Lot 5 of the Rutger Bleeker Patent.<sup>(94)</sup> The southern bounds of these 100 acres in Lot 5 abut the northernmost bounds of Expense Lot "B", which were owned by one Johannes Wolgemuth [one should also note that the south-westernmost corner of Expense Lot "A" abuts the northwestern corner of Lot B]. The other [John A.] possessed 100 acres of land in Lot 5 of the 1739 Division of the Bleeker Patent, as well as 21 acres in Expense Lot B of the Bleeker Patent which the Rutger Bleeker Papers show had previously belonged to [Captain] Adam Lipe.

Actually, Johannes Sr. inherited Casper’s property after his father’s death which was *sometime* between 1775 when Casper drafted his Will, and 1782 when the Will was “proved”. There is also a strong indication that Johannes, Sr had built his home on lot #2 and was living there long before his father died. In either event, since the war ended in 1783, it is not accurate to say that the Lot # 2 property “belonged *during the war* to his father, Casper.” In fact, given the state of the Tryon County Courts, Casper may have died even before the war began (1776) and still not had his Will “proved” until 1782.

According to Johannes Lipe, Sr.’s Will, he considered the southeast 100 acres of Woodlot #5 in the Bleeker Patent his son’s (Johannes J. Lipe *aka* Johannes Lipe, Jr.) Upon Johannes Sr’s death he willed the Woodlot #5 property to his grandson Johann Adam the son of the already deceased Johannes J. Lipe. (Montgomery County Wills, 2, 419-421). Whether Johannes Sr. ever lived on Woodlot #5 is questionable.

So, Johannes Sr. lived on home lot #2 during the war, and his son Johannes J., who died sometime after 1792, *probably* lived on the southeast 100 acres in Woodlot #5.

5. The 10+ acre [Church Lot of Expense Lot "A" of the Rutger Bleeker Patent](#) comprised the north-westernmost portion of Expense Lot "A" of the Rutger Bleeker Patent and which was located approximately 16 chains west of the bank of the Mohawk River. Long after the end of the American Revolution, Margaret Charlesworth stated that she had witnessed the burning of the German Reformed Church of Canajoharie and the home of

the Reverend Johan Daniel Gross from the home of her father, Johannes Lipe. <sup>(91)</sup> Due to the topography of the lands in discussion (see the 1943 U.S. Geographical Survey of the Fort Plain Quadrangle), **it would seem** nearly impossible for Misses Charlesworth to have witnessed the burning of these structures if her father had indeed lived upon the lands of Casper Lipe. Yet, if her father had been the Johannes whom had possessed the eastern half of Upper Woodland Lot 5 of the Rutger Bleeker Patent, her home would have been near the site of Fort Plank, which was located across a ravine to the west of and within "gun shot" of the German Reformed Church of Canajoharie. <sup>(92)</sup>

Margaret Charlesworth's father was Johannes Lipe, Sr who lived on Homelot #2 as I have indicated on the topographic map that I inserted above. Even a glimpse at that map should be enough to convince anyone that both the church and parsonage were visible from either Casper and Johannes Lipe, Sr's lot #2 property, or Woodlot #5.

6. The Johannes Lipe living nearest Sand Hill during the American Revolution possessed Upper Woodland Lot Five which adjoined the western bounds of Expense Lot "A", and shared a common corner with the Church Lot as demonstrated by Lipe's Quit Rent Receipt of September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1793.

Correct! That would be Johannes J. Lipe, son of Johannes Lipe, Sr and grandson of the pioneer Casper Lipe. He apparently died before his Father, because his father's will confers the Woodlot #5 land to Johannes J's son "Johann Adam" (whom Johannes, Sr. says he "brought up"). (Montgomery County Wills) John A. Lipe, the son of Adam Lipe was only about 15 years old when the war ended in 1783. He didn't marry until 1788 and it is unlikely that he was "homesteading" much before that date. -WL

7. The probated will of Johannes Lipe, Montgomery County Wills 2:419, leaves to his son, David Lipe, the Homestead upon which he, Johannes now lives ((Homestead Lot 2, Lowland 2, and the northernmost 21 acres of Expense Lot B), suggesting that he, Johannes, had previously lived elsewhere. The probated will of (Captain) Adam Lipe, Montgomery County Will 1:330, which leaves to his son, Daniel Lipe, the Homestead Farm upon which he, Adam, resides. Daniel Lipe later on April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1830, sells his interest in his father's Homestead (Homestead Lot 3, Lowland 3, and the southernmost 21 acres of Expense Lot B) to David Lipe, son of Johannes (Montgomery County Deed 27:452). This explains how David W. and Seeber Lipe, sons of David, came into possession of the lands of Captain Adam Lipe and how they in turn could assume that the fort site was upon lands they owned and believed had once belonged to their grandfather.

That's right – but Johannes Sr.'s Will stating "where I *now* live" was a fairly common practice and in no way suggests that he might have previously lived elsewhere. Nor do I understand why Johnson asserts that David W. and Seeber Lipe didn't know that there their great-uncle Adam was the original owner of the "fort lot." I'm fairly certain that they were aware their father purchased that land from their cousin. But, what is the point? Once again Johnson's interpretation suggests that he is reading into things with biased preconceived assumptions and taking inconsequential references way too literally. -W.L.

8. An analysis of the distances shown upon Colonial Surveyor's Maps of the Rutger

Bleeker and Otsquago Patents, dated 1772, reveal that the distance from the southernmost bounds of the Church Lot of Expense Lot "A" to the southernmost bounds of Casper Lipe's portion of Expense Lot "B" is approximately 33.095 chains. And, the distance from the southernmost bounds of the Church Lot of Expense Lot "A" to the southernmost bounds of Adam Lipe's portion of Expense Lot "B" is approximately 42.73 chains as shown on the 1772 maps of Expense Lot "A" and Expense Lot "B". Yet the distance from the Fort Plain Site listed in the Register of National Historical Sites to the known site of the Reformed German Church of Canajoharie is approximately 38.712 chains, placing the modern site for Fort Plain well in the center of the lands of [Captain] Adam Lipe versus those of Johannes Lipe.

First of all, the *exact* site of neither the 1772 nor the 1785 church is known because there is no physical evidence and archaeology has not been attempted, so it would be impossible to make such a measurement – at least not *that* accurately (down to “chains”). Secondly, “The Register of National Historical Sites” application was completed by Fort Plain Museum and SHPO personnel in the 1970s or 80s, and they would have been dependent on extant information. Since accurate measurements could not be made the legitimacy of this reference is at least open to question. What did they base it on?

That said, I can honestly say that Johnson's deduction here is absolutely **correct**. ***A large percentage of the original fortification known as Fort Plain was actually located within the part of Expense Lot B owned by Capt. Adam Lipe.*** Hallelujah, Ken Johnson finally gets it! Hopefully he also understands why the Fort Plain Museum Trustees have been so frustrated over the past 50 years by the fact that the Fort Plain Cemetery Association owns the portion of the hilltop that Adam originally owned, and they are using that lot – the original Fort site – to bury people in their modern cemetery. It is the expanded fortifications – blockhouse, redoubt and earthworks - built mostly after 1781 - that was situated upon the part of Expense Lot B owned originally by Casper and Johannes Lipe, Sr., and currently by The Fort Plain Museum. -WL

Shortly after the Fort Plank raid of August 2, 1780, a plan was devised to resupply Fort Schuyler. In this manuscript is a list of posts and stages along various routes in Upstate New York: <sup>(95)</sup>

*From New York to Albany 165, to Saratoga 36, to Fort Edward 14, to Lake George 14, to Ticonderago 40, to Crown Point 15, to S<sup>t</sup> Johns 110, to Montreal 26, to Three Rivers 90, to Quebec 90 In all 600 Miles*

*A Route from Schenectady to Fort Schuyler with the Posts on the Communication & a few Stages*

*From Schenectady to Whemp's 8 miles. Van Olindas 3. Fort Hunter 11, Fort Rensselaer 21. Fort Plank 3. & something out of the public way, Little Falls 12 a carrying Place of a Mile. Fort Herkimer 6 D<sup>o</sup> German Town 7. no body there. Old Fort Schuyler 9. New Fort Schuyler 18. The above Posts are on the South side of the River. There is a small Post about 3 Miles from Fort Rensselaer called Fort Clayd same side the River -- Fort Johnstown 28 Miles from Schenectady 5 Miles from Major Fondas. From Johnstown to*



*Fort Paris 14 Miles through the upper Road. Fort House 10, Fort Dayton 13*

*The above Posts are on the westside of the Mohawk River. . . .*

Utilizing a GIS and following the south shore highway (Rte 5-S), the distance from the site of Fort Hunter near the east bank of Schoharie Creek to the Fort Rensselaer/Fort Plain site on Adam Lipe's portion of the Expense Lot B Bleeker Patent parcel is 20.7 miles – amazingly close – only 3/10ths of a mile less than the 21 miles estimated by Henry Glen. A measurement along the same road between the Expense Lot B Fort Rensselaer/Fort Plain site and the Paris Road Fort Plank site (the two traditional locations for these forts) equals 2.8 miles, just 2/10ths of a mile short of Glen's estimate. Note also that Glen says Fort Plank is "**something out of the public way.**" Another way to express that would be to say that *Fort Plank* was not right on the public highway, and, indeed, that is the case. The Paris Road site is nearly 500 yards south of Rte 5-S (*aka* Dutchtown Road) – the south shore highway. The distance from the Paris Road Fort Plank site to the river landing below Little Falls is 11.5 miles, very close to the 12 miles Henry Glen indicated, and, finally, using Rte 5-S and Rte 163 it is exactly 3 miles from the Adam Lipe Expense Lot B Fort Rensselaer/Fort Plain site to the site of Fort Clyde near Frey's Bush. Glen's distances appear to be incredibly accurate and lend a great deal of credibility to the traditional Expense Lot B location for Fort Rensselaer/Fort Plain and the Paris Road Fort Plank site –W.L.

This accounting of distances coincides with the account of mileages in the Historical Collections of New York which shows the corresponding intervals as follows:

Albany to Schenectady 15 miles; Albany to Canajoharie 55 miles. Albany to Fort Plain Village 60 miles; Albany to Little Falls 74 miles.<sup>(96)</sup>

OK, that's nice, but these estimates are from a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century book and has little or nothing to do with identifying the locations of **Fort Plain** and **Fort Plank**.

According to the three accounts above, it should be approximately 58 miles from Albany to Fort Rensselaer; 15 miles from Fort Rensselaer to the Little Falls (a permanent landmark); and, about 61 miles from Fort Plank to Albany. The distances shown in the Historical Collections of New York thus suggest that Fort Rensselaer was located approximately 1 and a half miles east of the corporate limits of present-day Fort Plain Village, and that Fort Plank was three miles up river on or near the Bleeker Patent Church Lot, about 1 and a half miles above modern Fort Plain Village.

I have no idea why Johnson finds it necessary to construct composite mileage estimates from multiple sources that have absolutely nothing to do with Fort Plain or Fort Plank, but I would certainly question the accuracy and legitimacy of this process. The logical and most accurate test is to simply measure the distances between the sites that Glen lists along the known 18<sup>th</sup> century highways, as I have done above. Introducing all of these other estimates and computations accomplishes nothing other than to add inaccuracy and yet another confusion factor. Apparently that was the goal. –W.L.

The above being noted, it would seem that Fort Rennselaer was south or east of the

mouth the Otsquago Creek, a fact which is suggested by Revolutionary War Pensioner Jacob Gaudinier, RWPA #S15583 of the Town of Charlestown in Montgomery County stated, in his November 7, 1832 deposition, that while serving in Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett's Corps he was stationed . . . *At Fort Plain which is now in Canajoharie in said.* . . .

Indeed it is of interest to note that in his, Struggles Through Life, Exemplified In the Various Travels and Adventures in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America of Lieut. John Harriot, in 1793, Harriot states that while: “*proceeding fifteen miles from the falls* [the emphasis added by KDJ], *we were brought to Fort Plain, where [there] are two log-forts*”.

I cannot comment any further on the tortured logic that produced the first paragraph above. It is true that Fort Rensselaer/Fort Plain and Fort Plank were in the original Canajoharie District and that the 18<sup>th</sup> century settlement of Canajohary was contiguous to the Expense Lot B site of Fort Rensselaer/Fort Plain. Perhaps “Gaudinier” stated - as several other pensioners did - that the early settlement of Canajoharie was originally at Sand Hill in the area around Fort Plain. That would be an understandable statement, but since the affidavit was filed at a court in Ohio, the scribe may have garbled the meaning since he probably knew nothing of Mohawk valley place names and geography. In any event, this statement is such a lonely “outlier” that it should not be given much credence.

As for the distance from the Little Falls to the Expense Lot B Fort Rensselaer/Fort Plain site, I checked it with a GIS along the south shore route and it computes at only 14 miles. Fifteen would actually take you south of Otsquago Creek as Johnson triumphantly proclaimed, but I think he is “picking nits”. For an 18<sup>th</sup> century traveler to say that he proceeded 15 miles probably shouldn't be interpreted too literally, especially since all of the other available evidence places the fort site 14 miles away. A 7% error for an 18<sup>th</sup> century distance estimate is actually pretty good – not as good as Glen's estimates worked out, but pretty good nevertheless.

The list of posts above combined with the Writ of Sequestration, Harriot's narrative, and the voice of Mister Gaudinier would seem to focus the search for Fort Rensselaer on the southern portion of the 1730 Division of the Bleeker Patent.

Mr. Johnson can focus his search wherever he wants. The overwhelming historical evidence indicates that Fort Rensselaer was the official name of Fort Plain and that the fort known by those names (Fort Rensselaer/Fort Plain) was located on Expense Lot B of the Bleeker/Otsquago Patent on the Adam Lipe and Johannes Lipe farms – the hill that has been known for as long as anyone can remember as “Fort Hill”. It is no coincidence that this is the same site where abundant archaeological evidence of 18<sup>th</sup> century fortifications was uncovered between 1961 and 1976. –W.L.

Item Number Seven of the Rutger Bleeker Papers clearly demonstrates the presence of two pre-Revolutionary War structures of significance on the highlands directly above the Mohawk escarpment, and nearly in line with a group of islands in the Mohawk River at that juncture in its course. A close examination of Item Number Four of the same series suggests the two structures were built near Lot 19 of the 1742 Division of the Bleeker

Patent. <sup>(99)</sup> Could one of these structures be the Stone House spoken of by Nicholas Dunkle?

As pointed out above, there are two well-known stone houses that existed within a few hundred yards of the Expense Lot B Fort Plain/Fort Rensselaer site: Casper Lipe's house and John Abeel's. I'm certain there were other stone houses in the Bleecker Patent, including many that were never recorded on any map. We could pick any of them out of the proverbial hat. However, the law of parsimony demands that we look for the *least* complicated explanation that accounts for all of the known variables. Let's play by the rules of logic; since those conditions are satisfied at the traditional Fort Plain/Fort Rensselaer site, we needn't look any further.

At the same time that the British write of Fort Plain being opposite Stone Arabia, American accounts speak of Fort Rensselaer being opposite Stone Arabia. On September 17, 1780, Henry Glen wrote Colonel William Malcom: <sup>(100)</sup>

*From H Glen For Colonel W<sup>m</sup> Malcom Commanding ND*

*17 Sept<sup>r</sup> 1780*

*. . . -- Princeble people Names whose in fluence & Inclination Cane be Depene<sup>d</sup> upon -- Major Fonda -- Agent Col. Jacob Clock in F Paris Major Nucker Col. Peter Waggoner upside F Rennseleir <sup>(101)</sup> Z Betchell Esq<sup>r</sup> Supervisor Col. Voukert Vadder Conauagh -- John Fonda Esq<sup>r</sup> Col. Cloy<sup>d</sup> in F Plank -- Captain Gardeneer Major Fry Major Yates Supervisor Col. Peter Pellingier F. Dayton -- Peter Tygert Esq<sup>r</sup> Supervisor The Rev<sup>d</sup> Daniel Gross in F Rensselir a Good Men to Society & of Great Service in Tryon County Anthony V Vyhten Esq<sup>r</sup> Agent Captain Vadder Symon Vadder Samuel Gardenier Captain John Bradpeck Two McMaster<sup>s</sup> in Warensbush -- Hans Pellingier -- A. Van Horn Esq<sup>r</sup> -- do Peter Warmut -- B. Schuyler Esq<sup>r</sup> -- do Christiyn Nellis -- G. V Alstyn Esq<sup>r</sup> -- Conajohary Christopher Fox Johanes Lyp -- W<sup>m</sup> Fox -- Adam Lyp -- Lips Fox -- Jacob Mattis -- Peter Wagoner Jun<sup>r</sup> Esq<sup>rr</sup> Cap<sup>t</sup> Ab<sup>r</sup> Copman -- . . . —*

That's what we've been saying! It shouldn't be surprising that different primary sources describe Fort Plain and Fort Rensselaer as being in the same place, ***because both names refer to the same fort!*** Isn't that (once again) the simplest and most logical explanation? This really isn't rocket science, and there is no need to keep injecting extraneous confusion factors unless we are less interested in objective truth than promoting an obtuse point of view. –W.L.

Equally important in ascertaining the locations of Forts Rensselaer and Plank is the location of the Klaisburg. This settlement had for years been used as a rendezvous for military parties and was a site of great importance to the Mohawk Nation. By July 15, 1780 the British high command had targeted the site for destruction. <sup>(102)</sup> Despite its importance, no map shows its location and once again multiple clues are needed to pinpoint its site.

On August 2, 1780 Joseph Brant reached the Klaisburg and carried into effect a plan to

raze the settlements there and destroy any military units found: <sup>(103)</sup>

*Niagara Sept<sup>r</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> 1780.*

*Sir,*

*Yesterday afternoon I was honor'd with your Excellencys Secret & Confidential Dispatch of the 31<sup>st</sup> ult<sup>o</sup> and you may rely on my best efforts to assist the proposed Expedition . . . I have the pleasure of informing your Excellency that one Object of it has been already achieved. The Oneida Village, with the Fort, Church &ca, and also the Tuscarora Town near it having been burnt, the beginning of last Month, also Two Stocaded Forts below Fort Stanwix, and Soon after the party's that were with Capt Brant destroyed the Kleysbergh &ca containing a Church, 100 Houses and as many Barns besides Mills, and 500 Cattle and Horses, and on the 2<sup>d</sup> inst Capt Nelles marched with 100 Indians to Conajohary, who has probably struck a blow ere now, and shall be advised to Joyn Sir John, . . .--*

The first helpful clue in searching for the Klaisburg <sup>(104)</sup> seems to be the statement of Ensign Derick Van Vechten: <sup>(105)</sup>

*. . . in the Year 1780 he with his own & several other Companies were ordered out upon an Alarm created by a party of Indians to Johnstown from Johnstown they proceeded to Canajoharie some depredations were committed & from thence to a place farther west called Claysberg, or Clay Hill, where they remained a short time & returned home . . .*

Obviously if left alone, Van Vechten's word is of little help other than to establish a site some miles west of modern Canajoharie Village. However, concerning his service in November of 1778, William Feeter states: <sup>(106)</sup>

*. . . the militia was ordered to go from Fort Herkimer to Glaisburgh in the (now) Town of Minden in the County of Montgomery about two miles west of Fort Plain, the Militia at that place were under the Command of Col. Jacob Klock. they lay at the latter place till the massacre & destruction of Cherry Valley in the Now County of Otsego that Joins Montgomery County on the southwest the first of November the news Spread through the County & the militia at Glaisburgh went in pursuit of the enemy -- . . .*

Another more substantial hint is found in Daybold Moyer's sworn testimony: <sup>(107)</sup>

*In the year 1778 or 9 in the month of October at the time Cherry Valey was burned our whole regiment was ordered out & he deponent marched under Col. Klock & Capt House for that place -- we were called out four or five days before that place was burned because an attack was expected but whether on the Mohawk or more south we did not know -- we were a little south of fort Plank & near fort Plain that we might march either way -- the first news of the out break was that Cherry Valley was burned That he was then Marched towards that place . . .*

From the latter two statements it is established that Klock's Regiment was garrisoning the Klaisburg on the day(s) proceeding the Cherry Valley Massacre. With this in mind, one



must turn to the word of Colonel Jacob Klock for his opinion of his location on that fateful day. <sup>(108)</sup>

*Hartman Dorff November 11<sup>th</sup> 3 OClock P. M.*

*Sir*

*This moment one M<sup>r</sup> Thompson arriv'd here who informs me that he with several other Gentlemen ~~was~~ were on their way to Cherry Valley when they heard the report of about 30 Canon but they still proceeded as far as John Moors place being about 4 Miles this Side Cherry Valley they then hear a smart firing of small arms.*

*I am in great haste Sir*

*Your humble Servent.*

*Jacob Klock*

Obviously the settlement called The Klaiburg was also known as Hartman's Dorf. However, tradition holds that the only place known as Hartman's Dorf was located deep in the Schoharie Valley, dozens of miles south-east of Forts Plank and Rensselaer. Fortunately we have the sworn testimony of Daniel McGraw, Revolutionary War Soldier, who served at there in 1778 to give us a clue to its location: <sup>(109)</sup>

*. . . This deponent was again ordered out by Captain Snook & marched up the Mohawk River to the House of one Robert Yates . . . and from thence he was ordered by his Captain to go through Curry Town, and turned west about six or eight Miles to the House of one Hartman, the place was then called Hartmans Durrup and lay there three days on Guard From thence he went by the Order of his Captain up the Mohawk River as far as Fall Hill at the house of Warner Dygert . . .*

A search for any Hartmans in the area of the Otsquago Creek reveals that there was indeed a "Shot Hartman" who was a land owner in the Town of Canajoharie in 1799. <sup>(110)</sup> And, a Nicholas Hartman who was executed by order of a Court Martial held at Fort Schuyler for desertion along with Captain Joseph House's brother-in-law, Henry Witmosure, on August 17th, 1778. This seems to suggest that the surname "Hartman" was known within the Mohawk Valley prior to the year 1800. <sup>(111)</sup>

We also have a March 1, 1796, land deed which places Hartman's Dorf on the river flats south of the Otsquago Creek in the 1730 Division of the Bleeker Patent: <sup>(112)</sup>

*. . . All that certain Lot of Land situate lying and being in the County of Montgomery on the South side of the Mohawk river at Canajohary and within the limits and Boundaries of a patent known by the name of Otsquago patent, hereto for granted to Rutger Bleeker, Nicholas Bleeker and others, to wit Lot number nine Low land on Hartman's Flatts, beginning on the bank of the river in the division Line of Lots number eight and nine, and runs thence down the river as the same winds and turns to the division line between the Lots number nine and ten, and thence South Eighty degrees and thirty minutes west to the*

*foot of the Hill then up along the foot of the hill as the same winds and turns to the division line of Lot number eight, thence North Eighty degrees east to the river and contains twenty five acres, be the same more or less, together with the Homestead there to belonging . . .*

And, we have the probated will and contemporary land deeds of Adam Countryman which place Adam's war-time home upon the river flats of Hartman's Dorf. <sup>(113)</sup>

These items together establish the location of Hartman's Dorf or the Klaiburg to be in the 1730 Division of the Bleeker Patent, south of the mouth of the Otsquago Creek. This places Fort Plank on the northerly side of the Otsquago Creek, and places Fort Plain (or Rensselaer) nearby on the southerly side of the creek.

The occurrence of a place name such as the Klaiburg also suggests that a settlement or geographical landmark was located nearby which was well known by both the Indians and the British. And indeed, Caldawaller Colden's 1726 Map of the Mohawk River Settlements shows there to be a substantial Indian Village, the Canajoharie Castle, located in the north-eastern corner of a triangle formed by the junctions of the Mohawk River and the southern bank of the Otsquago Creek. <sup>(114)</sup> Evidence of this supposed village is found in the National Archives of Canada in a set of documents which suggests that an Indian Settlement was located near the mouth of the Otsquago Creek: The first, dated October 28th, 1731, is an order for a government representative to visit with the Canajoharie Indians and to investigate the loss of livestock owned by Hartman Windecker, Coenradt Countryman, and Hendrick Schremling <sup>(115)</sup>. And the second a document dated November 5th, 1731, noting that the Palatines: Johan<sup>s</sup> Keyser; Hend<sup>k</sup> Frey; Joh<sup>s</sup> Kreemer; Peter Teygaert; William Wormwood; Jacob Bouman; Hend<sup>k</sup> Walraet; Jacob Goltman; Karell Eerhart; and Peter Wagenaer had also lost livestock to the Indians of the Tarajoharies Castle, opposite the westernmost point of the Hermanus Van Slyck-Abraham DePeyster Patent. <sup>(116)</sup> An [early map of the DePeyster-Van Slyck Patent](#) in the Town of Palatine shows the Indian Village of *Tarigioris* was located at or near the place known as the Klaiburgh or Hartmansdorf. <sup>(117)</sup>

The preceding 12 paragraphs may be the most confused and contorted string of historical reasoning that I have ever encountered. I mean, I really *love* this stuff and have been doing it all of my adult life, but even knowing all of the pieces in this puzzle I can barely understand what the writer is trying to say. I can only imagine what a general reader could glean from this. With this kind of confused thinking and writing I am not surprised that most folks interested in these issues have simply given up trying to understand this "debate". How many times have I heard "it's so confusing?" Well it's really not! For God's sake, let's keep this simple.

**First**, the only reason that Kleiburg (or any variation of that place name) is of interest here is because Lt. Clement, Guy Johnson and other Loyalists noted in contemporary documents (*primary* sources) that Brant's August 2, 1780 Canajohary raid began at a place called "Kley's Barrick" and progressed eastward to an area around John Abeel's house.

**Second**, in the third paragraph above, Johnson established that a Dutchman named

Derick Van Vechten translated the place name as “Clay Hill”. That seems to jibe with my Google translator which says clay is *klei* in Dutch, and hill or mountain is *burg* in German and *berg* in Dutch. The Dutch and German custom of naming hills was apparently very common in the Mohawk Valley (eg *Geisenberg*, *Messerberg*, *Switzerberg*, etc). Johnson has noted that *berg* means castle in German, but it is important to note that it also means hill or mountain in Dutch. So, the evidence indicates that the place name Kleiburg or Kleiberg refers to a hill, and probably a *clayey* hill.

**Third**, Van Vechten places the Kleiberg **west** of the settlement then known as “Canajohary”. This is corroborated by William Feeter’s pension application, which specifies that the Kleiburg is “2 miles west of Canajoharie”.

So, the simple answer is that Kleiburg was a hill *approximately* two miles west of the 18<sup>th</sup> century settlement known as Canajohary. We know that it must have been west of lot #1 in the Bleecker Patent, because that is where John Abeel lived, and that is where the Americans stopped Brant’s eastward advance. Many 18<sup>th</sup> century maps and documents clearly establish that the 18<sup>th</sup>-century settlement of Canajohary was on Sand Hill (see Lenig, 2009, 16-19). In my humble opinion “Kleiberg” refers to the hill at the western end of Dutchtown or the Hartman Windecker Patent. This prominence overlooks the Revolutionary War-period location of the Upper Mohawk Castle to the northwest and also provides a very clear view of Cherry Valley and Springfield to the southeast. It is a unique strategic location – not two, but only about four miles northwest of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Canajohary settlement at Sand Hill.

It was **not** necessary to introduce the Hartmansdorf issue in order to establish the meaning and location of Kleiberg; but in so doing Johnson managed to create another confusion factor that led to an efficacious and self-serving conclusion. It was a conclusion that *fortuitously* seemed to agree with his otherwise ungrounded speculation that Fort Rensselaer was a separate fortification located on the Mohawk River flats south of the Otsquago Creek. What this all goes to prove is that if you know where you want the argument to go, it is easy enough to create divergences that will get you there. Hopefully, most people can see through the smokescreen.

Against my better judgment, now that Johnson has brought up the subject - even though it has little or nothing to do with **Fort Plank** and **Fort Plain** – what about Hartmansdorf?

Johnson’s deduction that Hartmansdorf and Kleiberg were equivalent place-names is based on two erroneous assumptions. First, he assumed that both names refer to the same “settlement”. We have learned that *burg* means hill in German, and from one of the same sources (Google Translator) I find that *dorf* means village. So, Hartmansdorf was a village, while “Kleiburg” was a hill. A village *might* be located on a hill, but the two terms did not *necessarily* refer to the same location. Second, he assumed that Col. Klock and his militia troops did not move for that entire “fateful day.” One witness placed them at Kleiberg and another at “Hartman’s Dorf” on that date, so Johnson assumed the two terms **must** refer to the same location. The fallacy here is that there are 24 hours in a day, and it is not safe to conclude that Klock and his men were in the same spot *when* each of those reports recorded their whereabouts.

Johnson notes that pension applicant Daniel McGraw remembered “Hartmans Durrup” as being 6-8 miles west of Currytown, which would place it somewhere between the modern villages of Canajoharie and Fort Plain, but McGraw was reconstructing that mileage estimate from memory over 45 years after making the trip. In the same breath he reports that he continued on from “Hartmans Durrup” to Fall Hill which is (according to GIS computation) 21 miles west of Currytown. So there is no doubt that McGraw traveled much further west than the Otsquago Creek. Not surprisingly, however, Johnson says he has “discovered” wills and land papers that refer to Lowland Lot #9 in the Otsquago or Bleecker Patent as “Hartman’s Flatts” in 1796. He has also found a man with the last name of Hartman living somewhere in the Town of Canajoharie in the 1799. From those two isolated “facts” he deduced that Hartmansdorf, otherwise known as “Klaisburgh,” was a settlement on the river flats south of Otsquago Creek in the present village of Fort Plain. How “Clay *Hill*” got to be located on the river *flats* and “Hartman’s Flatts” became Hartmansdorf he leaves to our imagination.

I have an alternate explanation. As Johnson noted, “tradition holds that the only place known as Hartman's Dorf was located deep in the Schoharie Valley.” *That Hartmansdorf* was named for Hartman Windecker, one of the leaders of the 1709 “Palatine” emigration to New York. Coincidentally, that same Hartman Windecker and other “Palatines” purchased and settled on land called the “Windecker Patent” just west of Sand Hill or Canajohary in 1731. It seems very possible - in fact likely to me – that those Germanic settlers brought the name of their settlement with them. The Windecker Patent is known locally as “Dutchtown” today, but Col. Klock, who lived across the river from Hartman Windecker, probably knew the settlement as Hartmansdorf.





Above - this 1757 Map shows the “high road” between Sand Hill on the east and present-day Mindenville on the west. Note the houses labeled “Hartmans” and “Countrymans” at the mid-point of the “high road” at Dutchtown. This is the location that I have identified as “Hartmansdorf”. It is about three miles NW of the location Ken Johnson has identified.

In the final paragraph above Johnson attempts to tie the Prospect Hill Mohawk settlement east of Otsquago Creek in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (“*Tarigioris*” Castle) to the location of “Klaisburgh”. The sources that he quotes establish that Mohawks and Palatines lived side by side in the area during the second quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and clashed over property rights (livestock), but the documents make no mention of Kleiburg or Hartmansdorf, and have no bearing on *Fort Plain* or *Fort Plank*, neither of which was even built until nearly a half-century later. Again Johnson has introduced confusion and obfuscation for no rational reason. –W.L.

On February 24, 1783, Major Alexander Thompson wrote his brother a letter from Fort Rensselaer which also is supportive of a southerly 1730 Division site for Fort Rensselaer: [\(118\)](#)

... This fort is situated on a height about half a mile from the river, which affords a beautiful prospect of the country around, and shows you at one view, **as far as the eye will carry**, fine fields like those of Bottle Hill . . .

Thompson's description of the view is hardly possible **from the site stated by Lossing and**

**Simms to have been the hallowed ground of Fort Plain.** Standing on the site assumed to be that of Fort Plain, directly above the escarpment from the Fort Plain Museum, the author noted:

. . . the northerly view reached the bend of the Mohawk River as it turns back westerly; the easterly view extended only to the highest hills of Stone Arabia; northerly, the low hill located just to the south of the site of the Reformed German Church of Canajoharie, totally obscures the tall pine trees surrounding the cemetery; to the south the line of sight is obscured by a hill less than a half mile distant, and finally, the view westerly extends itself only to the plains of the Windecker Patent.

Progress sometimes comes slowly, but if I read the above passage correctly, I think we have made some inroads. Here Johnson seems to be admitting that the Expense Lot B location owned currently by the Fort Plain Museum and Cemetery Association **is actually the same site that Lossing and Simms identified as the site of Fort Plain.** In paragraph #31 above he specifically states that the Fort Plain Museum hilltop is “*well over a half a mile due south of the fort location identified by J. R. Simms, W. L. Stone, and Benjamin Lossing*”. So he has apparently changed his opinion on this issue during the course of writing this essay. That’s progress! -W.L.

The view, as described by Thompson, is even less likely to have been from the known site of the Reformed German Church of Canajoharie, as the line of sight is severely restricted to the north, and is totally impeded by a low hill to the south. However, the river is still visible to a degree today, as are the hills of Stone Arabia. **As Johnson notes, there are a lot of trees that have grown up in the valley – especially within the past fifty years. The trees do obstruct the view from Fort Hill somewhat to the north and south, but to the east as he notes, you can see the highest “hills of Stone Arabia” and those are at least four miles distant.** With the trees cut (as they would have been in the 18<sup>th</sup> century), the view in other directions would have been quite spectacular as well. Anyway Thompson is simply saying that there are fine fields *as far as the eye will carry*. He didn’t specify how far that was. There is certainly no reason to rule out the Expense lot B location of Fort Rensselaer based on Thompson’s letter. -W.L.

The author has noted from his many trips to the sites of Fort Plank and to the Fort Plain Museum that **it was highly unlikely that there could be a house located immediately above the fort, as suggested in Marinus Willett's Orders Book:** <sup>(119)</sup>

*. . . Kilborn says he was on Centinel at my Marque from 11 till 1 oClock during the whole of which time ~~he heard~~ their was a Noise in the house back of the Marque by a number of men who appeared to playing of Cards, and that when the Colonel sent ~~the Corporal~~ ~~some person~~ a man to speak to em he heard em say they would be damned if they were to out Which words he heard repeated several times*

*John Kilborn*

*Daniel Holes says he commanded the Quarter Guard last night. That he heard a Noise in a house just back of the Colonels Marque from early in the morning untill two OClock in the Morning that about 12 OClock he was Ordered by the Colonel to go see what the*

Noise was and have a stop put to it . . . that Some of them told him that was their Quarters and said that they would be as still as they could -- And upon his repeating his message They asked him if the Colonel did not live down the hill under a Stack of hay . . .

Daniel Olds

F Rensselaer  
5<sup>th</sup> Sepr 81

I don't understand how or why Johnson thinks these passages suggest *"there could be a house located immediately above the fort"*. There is no mention of any identifiable geographic location. The Colonel's Marquee **and** the officer's hut may have both been inside the main fort, or outside. In either case there is no suggestion that there was a house immediately **above** the fort – only an officers' hut **behind** Willett's tent. Once again there is nothing here that eliminates the Expense Lot B site or anyplace else for that matter! –W.L.

One should also note that no military documents, save four, mention Fort Plank after the great raid of August 2, 1780. Yet Fort Rensselaer is mentioned numerous times up through the early 1790s.<sup>(120)</sup> It is also interesting to note that Fort Plain does not make its appearance in British Military document(s) until October 27, 1780, when it is noted that 400 troops were encamped at Fort Plain opposite Stone Arabia.<sup>(121)</sup> Yet the first American Military mention of Fort Plain does not occur until March 12, 1781, in the minutes of the Court Martial of Brigadier General Robert Van Rensselaer.<sup>(122)</sup>

This is just silly! I took a quick look at my index of primary sources (contemporary documents) for September through December 31, 1780 and came up with nine references to **"Fort Plain"** (or Fort Plains) and six documents mentioning **"Fort Plank"** – and that's not even counting the numerous contemporary references that date to 1781, 1782 and 1783.

Fort Plank is mention in three separate Returns of Provisions on Hand and Issued in September, October and November 1780 (USNARA, Rev War Miscellaneous Manuscripts), again in a letter from Henry Glen to Col William Malcolm dated 9/17/1780 (Glen-Yates Papers, NYSHA), in an article in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* dated 10/21/1780, and in a British intelligence Report dated 10/27/1780 in the Haldimand Papers) - and that's just during the fall of 1780.

What I did find interesting was that during early November 1780, while the Fourth New York Regiment was stationed at Canajohary, Colonel Weissenfels letters and some of the Regimental Orders are dated at "Fort Rensselaer," but Ensign Barr who was clearly present at the same site as the rest of the regiment (he mentions several other officers with him) calls it "Fort Plains" in his personal diary. For instance, on 11/6/1780 he notes that he "crossed the river at Mr. Walradt's to Fort Plains".

([www.rootsweb.com/sunygreen2/john\\_barr\\_1780.htm](http://www.rootsweb.com/sunygreen2/john_barr_1780.htm)) On 11/15 the Regimental Orders for the Fourth New York Regiment march to Fort Stanwix is dated "Fort Plain" and mentioned they are to "proceed in the road leading to where the Church used to stand (this was after Brant burned the church)." (Lauber, *Orderly Books of the Second and*

*Fourth New York Regiment*, 842).

All of this information clearly supports the idea that Fort Plank was a separate entity and that Fort Plain and Fort Rensselaer were interchangeable names for the fort near the Church at Canajoharie. I just don't see how the evidence can be read any other way.

I do agree with Johnson, however, that there are fewer *official* references to Fort Plank after August of 1780. My interpretation of the significance of that fact is that Fort Plank became less important to the defensive strategy after Fort Plain/Fort Rensselaer became the primary headquarters post in the region, although it continued to be active until 1783 as a refuge for displaced inhabitants. –W.L.

Of the first three documents dated Fort Plain, aside from the Haldimand Papers and the Court Martial of Robert Van Rensselaer, all were written **after the date(s) that Revolutionary War Pensioners swear that Fort Plank had been renamed Fort Plain;** and two of these four can be attributed to letters written by Colonel Marinus Willett who was, according to his own letterbook, at Fort Rensselaer.<sup>(123)</sup>

They were written after 1832? That's when the pension law was passed and when the pension applicants claim that Fort Plank became known as Fort Plain. (Remember they said "now known as Fort Plain"). I think I've already explained that thoroughly. As for Willett, when he first arrived in 1781 he may have called it "Fort Plain" - but I don't believe he refers to it as anything other than "Fort Rensselaer" in 1782 and 1783, after being ordered to only use that name.

*Fort Plain Sept. 7, 1781.*

*By information from Fort Herkimer the enemy are down in force. I am collecting the Militia and shall pursue them as soon as possible. You will inform Genl. Stark of this as soon as possible . . .*

Willett's Letter Book contains a similar letter written to an unknown correspondent with the same date:<sup>(124)</sup>

*Fort Renselear 7<sup>th</sup> Sept 81*

*Sir*

*By accounts this moment received the enemy appear to be in Considerable force at the German flats I wish you to March your regiment this way with as much expedition as possible & as much Provision as they can furnis themselves with - without being detained*

*I am &c*

The next two references to Fort Plain have the same similarity. Both are dated by Willett, Fort Rensselaer, and both are quoted by their recipients to have been originated from Fort Plain.



Another hint at the reluctance of soldiers to call Fort Plain Fort Rensselaer,<sup>(125)</sup> is found in the journal of Ensign John Barr, who had been promoted from sergeant to ensign while stationed at Fort Plank in 1779. In his journal, Barr, notes that the Fourth New York Regiment arrived at Fort Plank on January 6, 1781 and the following day, he *dined at Fort Plains with Captain Wright at the Reverend Mister Gross'*; <sup>(126)</sup> suggesting the Reverend Mister Gross was living at Fort Rensselaer as in the above quoted letter by Mr. Glen.<sup>(127)</sup>

Yes, Ensign Barr was clearly saying that he was at Fort Plank on January 6, 1781 and at Fort Plain the following day. Clearly they were two different places, and Johnson's deduction that Rev. Gros lived at **"Fort Plains"** (as Barr called it) and **"Fort Rensselaer"** (as Henry Glen referred to it) strongly suggests that Fort Plain and Fort Rensselaer were one and the same. Once again, the logic is pretty much inescapable. There was Fort Plank and there was a separate fort known as both Fort Plain and Fort Rensselaer. –W.L.

Revolutionary War Pensioners who claim to have served at both Forts Plank and Plain universally agree that one could not reach Fort Plank from the east without having first marched to or past Fort Plain. **Correct – that certainly fits the relationship between the Expense Lot B location of Fort Plain and the Paris Road location of Fort Plank.** Yet, of the many dozen soldiers who claim to have served at Fort Plain under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett, only two, Conrad Edick and Eliphalet Kellogg,<sup>(128)</sup> mentions having served at both Fort Rensselaer and Fort Plain. And, only these two mention Fort Rensselaer by name. **I'm not certain how these two sentences in this paragraph are logically related, but I'll comment on the Edick and Kellogg pensions anyway.** Conrad Edick (W2084) states "that during the year 1782 [he] was in garrison at Fort Plain, Fort Ranslear, Fort Herkimer and Fort Dayton at different times, and assisted in building redoubts near Fort Dayton and Fort Herkimer and Fort Plain ..." Eliphalet Kellogg (S2692) states only that he served at Ballstown, Fort Rensselaer and Fort Herkimer; Fort Plain is never mentioned in his affidavit. It is interesting to note that Eliphalet Kellogg testified to Conrad Edick's service, and Conrad Edick testified to Eliphalet Kellogg's service. Edick however is the only applicant who mentions serving at both Fort Plain and Fort Rensselaer as though they were separate forts. I don't know what to make of Edick's testimony, but I do know that only one out of more than 250 applicants mention Fort Rensselaer and Fort Plain as separate entities. I think that is negligible – especially for 250 men who are remembering events that occurred 50 years earlier. –W.L.

Contemporary evidence [circa 1782-4] supports the theory that Fort Rensselaer and Fort Plain were not one and the same. Moses Dusten, a captain in the Second New Hampshire Regiment which was stationed in the Mohawk Valley to support Willett, notes in his personal orderly book, activities at both Forts Rensselaer and Plain in 1782.<sup>(129)</sup> Lieutenant Lawrence Tremper also notes having been stationed at both Forts Rensselaer and Plain while serving under Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett in 1783-4.<sup>(130)</sup>

Lt. Tremper's journal, as transcribed by Ken Johnson does speak of Fort Plain, Fort Rensselaer and Fort Plank. Dusten does as well, but it must be remembered that these are personal journals and the soldiers were not obligated to call Fort Rensselaer by its official

name. I have very little doubt that after Gen Van Rensselaer's court-martial the name "Fort Rensselaer" was never used informally in the Mohawk Valley. The Second New Hampshire troops almost invariably call it Fort Plain. I have speculated that this fact may reveal some anti-Dutch sentiment on the part of the New Englanders. –W.L.

Thus ongoing research continues to suggest that Fort Plank was built either on or very near the Church Lot (Expense Lot A) of Bleeker's Patent <sup>(131)</sup> in Minden Township, Montgomery County, New York. If this is so, other documentation should be supportive.

Yes, if this was so you would think there would be *some* shred of real evidence supporting the location other than Ken Johnson's bald face assertion! -W.L.

On August 2, 1780, Captain Joseph Brant with 350 troops swept through the area settlements from the river south to Kley's Barrick to the southern escarpment of the Otsquago Creek on eastward to modern Fort Plain Village. While thus engaged, Brant's raiders destroyed the house of one Henry Walrath, called Fort Walrath, <sup>(132)</sup> sending the inhabitants fleeing about two miles eastward to Fort Plank for safety. <sup>(133)</sup>

They abandoned the fort *before* the enemy arrived according to Lt. Clement and "fled to the river" as noted by Anna Moyer and more specifically to Fort Plain according to traditions in the Walrath family. –W.L.

Unfortunately, no contemporary map(s) exist which show the location of Fort Walrath or confirm its distance from Fort Plank. However on March 1, 1802 Henry Walrath sold a portion of his interest in Lot Three of Windecker's Patent, approximately two miles west of the Church Lot, to Jacob H. Diefendorf. <sup>(134)</sup> As this deed alone cannot prove that this lot was the site of Fort Walrath, other clues must be considered.

Johnson *knows* better than this! Henry Walrath Sr's Will left Lot 9a to his son Ensign Henry Walrath. This is all covered in the notes above and has been well documented by A. Ross Eckler's research. –W.L.

In Joseph Clement's letter of August 14, 1780 to Sir Guy Johnson, <sup>(135)</sup> Brant is noted to have destroyed two mills. However on August 3, 1780 Jellis Fonda wrote Henry Glen of Schenectady with news that only Lansen's Mill had been destroyed in Brant's raid. <sup>(136)</sup> This apparent discrepancy is addressed in a letter from Colonel Jacob Klock to Governor George Clinton on April 18, 1781 in which he notes only two mills remain on the Tryon County frontiers; these being at Forts Walrath and Nellis. <sup>(137)</sup> The presence of a mill near the house of Henry Walrath would suggest a house site on or very near a creek. After carefully reviewing all land deeds dealing with land(s) owned by Henry Walrath(s) it becomes obvious, using patent maps contemporary to the period, that only a lot on the eastern end of Windecker's Patent would qualify as the site of such a mill, and thus as the home of Henry Walrath. The sale of two tracts of land in Lot Three of the Windecker Patent by a Henry Walrath contemporary to the period, <sup>(138)</sup> leads to a Fort Walrath, Lot Three Theory.

That **would** all be very neat, except that Fort Walrath – the one on the south side of the river – was totally destroyed in August of 1780. Colonel Klock's letter, as noted, is dated

4/18/1781 – long after Henry’s fortified house was destroyed. There was, however another “Fort Walrath” at the home of Adolf Walrath on the north side of the river (Palatine) near present-day West St. Johnsville. That is the Walrath property that Colonel Klock was referring to and the site of the mill that was still up and running in 1781. Had there been a mill on Ensign Henry Walrath’s property, I’m sure it *would have* been destroyed by Brant and not still in commission on 4/18/1781.

As for Lt. Clement’s claim that they burned two mills on August 2, 1780, I’m not certain what to make of it. We know for certain that the mill at present-day Hallsville was burned. Jacob G. Lansing of Schenectady appears to have had an interest in that mill, even though surviving accounts associate it with John Rother. It may be that Rother was simply managing the mill for Lansing, and, since the Americans only report that one mill was destroyed; Clement’s claim may have been inflated. –W.L.

Support for this Fort Walrath, Lot Three Theory, exists in a Tryon County deed, dated May 27, 1773, laying out a new road to run from Fall Hill to the King’s Highway to the eastern border of the Canajoharie District: <sup>(139)</sup>

*The Commissioners have altered and laid out the following roads in the District: 1) Public highway beginning in the division line between the Districts of Canajoharie and the German flats, near the house of Warner Deychert running thence to the foot of the Fall Hill, then with an alteration northward in a straight line to join the former road where one Peter Hunt formerly lived, thence along to or near the Canajoharie or Indian Church, thence with an alteration southward to where it joins a former Kings Road at the house of Hendrick Walrath, thence to the division line of Joost Lipe and John Abeel, thence to and past the house of John Abeel, <sup>(140)</sup> where it joins the former Kings Road called the River Road, thence to the division line of Mohawk District and Canajoharie District, except a small alteration between the house of Johannis Smith and the lower part of his farm . . .*

Exactly how does this quote “lend support” to the idea that Hendrick Walrath’s house was on Lot #3 of the Windecker Patent, rather than Lot 9 as Eckler has indicated? It looks to me like this document is referring to the stretch of Rte. 5-S which diverges from the old “River Road” at the Indian Castle Church then runs up the hill to “Dutchtown.” It does not indicate where Walrath’s house was located other than to infer that it was someplace east of Indian Castle (the beginning point) and west of Sand Hill (the end point). – W.L.

A careful review of the 1766 Tax List of the Canajoharie District precisely identifies the area residents living along the above road in the following order, along with the tax owed by each: <sup>(141)</sup>

*. . . Andrew Dussler 1 Marcus Cunterman 8 [Lot8B Windecker Patent] Hendk. Wallrad junr. 12 [Lot9A Windecker Patent] Hendk. Ekler 2 Hendk. Ekler junr. 1 Jacob Haber 1 Martin Sparbeck 1 Adolph Wallrad 13 [Lot 9B Windecker Patent] Christian Young 3 Hendk. Mayer 18 [1<sup>st</sup> Allot Lot 7, Van Horne or Canajoharie Patent] Peter Miller 8 [Lot 2 or new Lot 3 Windecker Patent] Peter Gerlagh 8 Jacob Dieffendorff 18 [Orig. Lot 3 Windecker Patent] Hendk. Dieffendorff 2 [Lot 4 Windecker Patent] Thomas Deby 2*

Francis Ute 2 Andrew Keller<sup>12</sup> [*1<sup>st</sup> Allot, Lot 1, Van Horne or Canajoharie Patent*] . . .

The location of various people on this list can be easily identified by using Certificates of Quit Rent Remission from the period circa 1786-1792, Quit Rent Receipts, early Patent Maps, and Montgomery County Land Deeds. These documents clearly show the residence of Henry Moyer to have been on Lot Seven of the **First Allotment of Van Horne's Patent**, [*This is the same as the Canajoharie Patent*]<sup>(142)</sup> Peter Miller on Lot Two of Windecker's Patent [*original Lot 2*],<sup>(143)</sup> Hendrick Diefendorf on Lots Four and Five of Windecker's Patent [*Lot 4 is correct*],<sup>(144)</sup> and Andrew Keller on Lot One of the First Allotment of Van Horne's Patent.<sup>(145)</sup> Of the abovementioned lots; Windecker's Lot Two, Van Horne's [*Canajoharie Patent*] First Allotment Lot Seven, and Windecker's Lot Three all share a common border. It is also noted that **Captain Jost House's Father, Jost House**, possessed Lot Two of Wagner's Patent which borders [*new*] Lot Three of Windecker's Patent on the south.<sup>(146)</sup>

This has already been done by A. Ross Eckler in his excellent Windecker Patent article. *Windecker's Patent Lot #1* did share a border with Moyer's lot on the *Van Horne Patent, 1<sup>st</sup> Allotment, Lot #7*; and *Weiser and Wagner's Lot #2* (Jost House) and *Windecker's original lot #2 or new Lot #3* (partially owned by Frederick Plank) were adjacent to each other, but I don't believe they shared a border with Moyer's lot in the Van Horne Patent. But (once again) I'm not sure I understand the point of this exercise unless it is to introduce yet another confusion factor that has absolutely nothing to do with identifying the location of Fort Plain and Fort Plank. –W.L.

The location of the Geisenburg Settlement at the intersections of Lot Three Waggoner's Patent and Lot Five of the Lansing Patent<sup>(147)</sup> negates any assertions that Fort Plank was built at or near the Geisenburg. The statements of those who reportedly marched from Fort Plank three to four miles west-southwesterly to perform guard duty at the Geisenburg,<sup>(148)</sup> and the accounts of Abraham Wemple and his troops,<sup>(149)</sup> clearly contradict any **Fort Plank/Geisenburgh Theories**.

Why invoke a non-existent “theory” that Fort Plank was at Geissenburg? To my knowledge no one has ever said that.

Jacob Garlock (S13119) cited here by Ken Johnson says “about the first of April [1778] – was stationed & kept at work at building Fort Plank *at a place called Dutch Town* in the Town of Minden.”

Of the pension records cited by Johnson to corroborate this statement, four mention “Geissenburg” or “Gause Barrick”. Garlock and Van Camp mention being sent there from Fort Plank, but do not give a direction or distance. Young says it was “a few miles south of Fort Plank,” and Eckler says it was “distant three or four miles.” The area that Ken Johnson has suggested was known as “Geissenburg” is only about 1½ miles south of the Paris Road Fort Plank location, and it really doesn't jibe well with the relatively long estimates of 3-4 miles. So I agree that *something* is wrong here. However, I do not think the problem lies with the Paris Road location of Fort Plank; I believe that Johnson may have also mislocated the Geisenberg.



The area that Johnson has identified is at the confluence of *Otsquago* Creek and a major tributary called *Otsquene* Creek. This area was the eastern extremity of a 1722 land grant to the “Palatines” Conrad Weiser and Peter Wagner. An early (but undated) map of this land is in the Bleeker Papers at the New York State Library (Mss 10816-1). That map is endorsed “Gytte Burg.” Again with reference to Google Translator I find that “geit” is goat in Dutch, we have already learned that burg or berg is hill in either German or Dutch, as the case may be. So it seems we are dealing with a place called Goat Hill. The question is where in relation to the Weiser Patent was Goat Hill? Ken says at the confluence of the *Otsquene* and *Otsquago Creeks* which is the east end of the patent. The other end stretches nearly two mile west to the current hamlet of Hallsville.

When I was a little boy growing up in this area, my grandfather (a transplanted Pennsylvania Dutchman) would always point to a very high hill northwest of Hallsville and tell me that it was “the Geisenberg” or goat hill. He might have been mistaken, but it is 2.88 miles southeast of the Paris Road Fort Plank site, and that does comport better with the pensioners estimates. Right or wrong, I have always equated Hallsville with the Geisenberg. –W.L.

In 1781, Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett took command of the troops guarding the western frontiers and established his command at Fort Rensselaer on the Mohawk River. While in command there he states he twice visited the home of George Herkimer near the Little Falls in Herkimer County, New York. On both occasions, Willett notes that he passed by **Fort Willett, on Lot Six of Windecker's Patent,**<sup>(150)</sup> and Fort Plank; both going to and returning from his host's abode.<sup>(151)</sup> This scenario is supportive of the Church Lot Theory in the sense it appears that the colonel was traveling upon the Dutchtown Road which traverses the Windecker Patent from east to west.<sup>(152)</sup> **Thus, it would seem clear that Fort Plank was located above the River Road on an alternate route to Herkimer's at the Little Falls.**

The location of Fort Plank on the Dutchtown Road would account for the statement by Robert H. Wendell, who in speaking of the August 2, 1780 raid stated . . . *A number of houses were then burning, among them John Abeel's. From thence we proceeded to Fort Plank a short distance further.*<sup>(153)</sup>

This description of Fort Plank's location also coincides with the description of forts and stages on the road from Schenectady to New Fort Schuyler:<sup>(154)</sup>

*. . . Fort Hunter 11, Fort Rensselaer 21. Fort Plank 3. & something out of the public way, Little Falls 12 a carrying Place of a Mile. Fort Herkimer 6 D° . . .*

Willett did travel on the south shore highway (“Dutch Town Road”) and as I have been saying, Fort Plank was on original Lot #2 of the Windecker Patent while Fort Willett was on the northern portion of Lot 9 at the highest point in Dutchtown where the beacon light stood for many years on “The Fort Willett Stock Farm,” now known as the Veit Farm. Again – no mystery – the Fort Willett location has been preserved in the neighborhood since it was taken down after the war. The traditionally identified locations are in perfect harmony with Willett’s description and once again there is no need to invent some new explanation –W.L.

In June of 1990 the author, armed with these clues as to the location of Fort Plank, traveled to the Mohawk Valley of New York in hopes of being able to walk upon the site of Fort Plank. Prepared with the knowledge that the Church Lot's north-east corner was located six chains from the mouth of the Kahowegheron Creek on the Mohawk River, <sup>(155)</sup> the author set out to find this creek and retrace a path up its banks to the Church Lot. Upon his arrival at Old Canajoharie, he found his task complicated by the alterations of the topography of the land from the construction of the Erie Canal, the West Shore Railroad, the New York State Turnpike, and the resulting re-situating of many roads from their former courses. Unable to find anyone locally who knew the location of the Kahowegheron Creek, the author resorted to wading down the local creeks until he found one whose mouth was located at the southern-most end of a large island lying in the Mohawk River.

On a cool Saturday morning, the author left his vehicle on what is now known as the River Road, and waded down the Kahowegheron Creek. Upon exiting from the waters of the Mohawk, the author marched resolutely westward looking for the site of his prey. While thus engaged, he noted an open field with several older pine trees growing in an open square arrangement similar to that described by Nelson Greene in 1913. Spotting a small white residence south of the trees, the author met with Mr. Raymond Luft, a kindly gentleman of many years residence along the Mohawk. Luft stated he believed he owned the graveyard I sought and pointed out [the only remaining gravestone](#).

**How romantic! I think Johnson should have been born 150 years earlier. Like Max Reid he was drawn to his discovery by cosmic forces. Very Victorian.**

It would seem odd that only one stone would remain in a graveyard as large as the records of the Reformed German Church of Canajoharie indicated, however, in a letter addressed to the author by Lora M. (Flint) Bowman, the following was revealed: <sup>(156)</sup>

*There was a big Cemetery behind the church on Sand Hill (1750) -- burned 1780 -- they kept interring there until about 1840.-- I spent several hours in this cem. looking for headstones.-- I found about 12 -- Douglas Ayres -- maybe about 86 years old? -- when he was about 18 years old?-- he saw a farmer take all the stones in a big wagon and dumped them in his barnyard. I had a hard time believing him but I really do now. The people that died in what they called Minden Section were buried there & Fort Plain. We have a very large village cemetery, chartered 1850 but I see a few burials before that -- then they didn't use the old Sand Hill Cem. anymore.*

On June 4, 1991, the author returned to the Luft Property and with the express permission of Mr. Luft, <sup>(157)</sup> went down to the site of the old cemetery to photograph this remaining stone in hopes of proving it to belong to a person known to have been buried in the graveyard of the German Reformed Church of Canajoharie. This stone was found to be that of Robert McFarlan's, and thus proving the identity of this graveyard. <sup>(158)</sup>

Looking directly westward from Mr. McFarlan's grave, one can see a peninsula of land similar to the one spoken of by Mr. Lossing. The site matches the topography demonstrated by Stone in his Life of Brant ; the sole difference after 211 years, being the

loss of several feet of subsoil from the eastern half of the site.

Here's the real problem. Johnson is in love! In love with his own romantic stories. I first suspected that when I read the melodramatic forged letter that he concocted to introduce his *Bloody Mohawk* book. He traveled thousands of miles and even moved here to straighten out the history of the Mohawk Valley based on cosmic vibrations that only he (and maybe Gavin Watt) seems capable of receiving. How can you argue with that!

In my opinion Johnson's book should be shelved next to Walter D. Edmunds and Robert Chambers works in the historical fiction section of the library. –W.L.

The site spoken of is now believed to be in the possession of Mr. George W. Collins of New York City, New York. Collins purchased his 22 acre farm from Richard and Ruth Welch in 1976. Mrs. Welch was born Ruth Klock, a daughter of Irvin Klock. Ruth states her father only owned the 22 acres on the north side of Route 5S, the remainder of his farm being on the south-side of the road.

Thus, it would seem that an ongoing search for Fort Plank, both documentary and archeological, should now be directed upon the "Expense Lot "A" site, to either prove or disprove the Church Lot Theory. Further research on a site in the southeastern corner of the Otsquago Patent for Fort Plank's sister fort, Fort Rensselaer, should also be undertaken. Until such investigations indicate differently, no other option seems plausible than to stand in defense of the facts

So go surface-hunt this field and see if you can come up with even a handful of 18<sup>th</sup> century artifacts. If you find some real evidence I would be happy to follow-up, but I'm betting you won't. By the way, the Fort Plain Museum has many pounds of 18<sup>th</sup> century military and domestic artifacts from the Lipe properties on Expense Lot B.

1. Annals of Tryon County , page 175.
2. William L. Stone, xxi.
3. The Mohawk Valley Democrat, July 13, 1913:8; Thomas Sammons, RWPA #W19000.
4. Benson J. Lossing, 1:262, Footnote 1.
5. Annals of Tryon County , 1851 Edition: pages, 4-6.
6. The Frontiersman of New York, 1:573.
7. Ibid: 128.
8. Ibid: 221.
9. This farm is now owned by Lynden Failing.

Not according to the Montgomery County Property Tax Records.

10. The Frontiersman of New York 2:534.

11. The "New Century Atlas of Montgomery and Fulton Counties New York. 1905 .

12. Atlas of Montgomery and Fulton Counties New York. 1868.

13. Greene, Nelson. Fort Plain - Nelliston History, 1580 -1947 , page 40.

14. "Old Fort Plain: What Is Fact, and What Is Fancy?" Monday, November 17, 1975. *The Amsterdam Recorder* of Amsterdam, New York. Repeated requests by the author to see the field notes generated by either Mr. Tuttle or Mr. Lenig have been denied by the staff of the Fort Plain Museum. Similar requests to view the infrared photography prints have also been denied.

Probably because the "staff" at the museum did not deem Mr. Johnson qualified to interpret archaeological field notes. –W.L.

15. The artifacts displayed in an accompanying newspaper photograph included; a straight razor, three two-tined cooking forks with their wooden handles nearly intact, a butcher knife with its wooden handle nearly intact and a few fragments of a pottery plate.

See my comments above. –W.L.

16. Lossing's 1848 Concept of Fort Plain Valid Based on Recent Research". Tuesday, November 18, 1975. *The Amsterdam Recorder* of Amsterdam, New York.

17. Evidence shows Fort Plain Blockhouse Rectangular, Not Octagonal. Wednesday, November 19, 1975. *The Amsterdam Recorder* of Amsterdam, New York.

18. Votes and Proceedings of the Senate of the State of New-York; At Their Third Session, Held at Kingston, In Ulster County, Commencing, August 24, 1779 (Fish-Kill: Printed by Samuel Loudon, MDCCLXXIX), 87.

19. Wayne Lenig. "Fort Plain, Fort Plank, Fort Rensselaer, and Canajoharie". 17 Nov 2001. Page 26-7.

20. See Montgomery County Deed 13:400: Delia Blank to Joseph House and Jacob Wright.

21. The Papers of the Continental Congress, Reel 66, Item 53, Page 17.

21a. Jackson ex dem. Wright and others, against Diefendorf and Zoller. The Supreme Court of Judicature and in the Court for the Trial of Impeachments and the Correction of Errors, in the State of New York, Volume 3:269.

22. Frederick Young, brother of Johann Adam Young, passed away in the King's



Garrison at Niagara in December of 1777. As he died without issue, Frederick's siblings fell heirs to estate. Thus, Elizabeth (Young) House became entitled to at least one-fourth of her father's share of the Frederick Young Estate.

But there is evidence that Frederick Young's Bleecker Patent Woodlot property was seized by sheriff Van Horne for a debt of £45 to Schenectady merchant John Sanders and sold to John S. Glen at public auction to satisfy that debt on 6/5/1782. At the time it was described as a "*certain Lott of Land Situate lying and being at Canajohary on the South side of the Mohawks River nere Fort Plank.*" (emphasis mine) –W.L.

23. Harold Young, dir.

24. This quotation is found within the 14<sup>th</sup> minute of the film.

25. Jeremiah Van Rensselaer's Map of the 1772 Division of the Rutger Bleeker Patent, found within the Albany County Clerk's Office and matching a map of the said 1772 Division found within the Rutger Bleeker Papers (NYSL MSS #SC10816-5), represents a potential fort site on the western edge of Expense Lot "A" with a small black diamond within three acres which Van Rensselaer had stated was set aside for a public road (Field Book of the 1772 Division of the Rutger Bleeker Patent within the New York State Archives). This potential site is located very near the southwest corner of the "Church Lot" and the northeastern corner of Upper Woodland Lot 5 of the Rutger Bleeker Patent

Yes - and the "small black diamond" at the "potential fort site" is labeled "church". I wonder what that means? –W.L.

26. Stone's, Life of Joseph Brant , Volume One. **Author's note** : The depiction of mountains being in the background in Stone's sketch of Fort Plank and copies of the sketch reproduced both Lossing and Simms seem to suggest that the view of the fortress and the church is in a south to north directional. From the church yard of the Reformed German Church of Canajoharie, mountains are only visible in the back ground when looking from south to north and when looking from west to east. The theory of a south to north view is also supported by Jephtha R. Simms' statement that the fortress was located on the next eminence westward of *the Cemetery Hill* ( The Frontiersman of New York, 1:573).

The mountains are obviously supposed to be the Adirondack foothills on the east or north side of the river and they could *only* be seen beyond the church from the Expense Lot B site on the Johannes Lipe farm. As explained above, Simms is not talking about the 1785 church cemetery, he is specifying the next eminence west (or up river) from the 1871 Fort Plain Cemetery, which is the current site to the south (or east) of Fort Hill. (see annotated topographic map above) –W.L.

27. Surveyor's Field Book of the 1772 Division of the Otsquago Patent: Field Book Number 16, Subdivision A, formerly in the Office of the Secretary of State, but now in the New York State Archives,

28. This refers to the Reformed German Church of Canajoharie whose surviving records

are housed within the Utica, New York Public Library.

29. John Yordan, RWP A #S26982.

30. Benjamin J. Lossing's Pictorial Field Book of the American Revolution , 1:261-3. N.B. Lossing includes in his work a copy of the Fort Plank Sketch found in Stone's 1838, Life of Brant , Volume 2: Appendix A.

31. The author has not been able to find any evidence that this test actually occurred. Thus, this statement is included only to place the Reformed Church in a geographical relationship with the fortress.

**A cannon shot away! And how far was that, Ken?**

32. John Jacob Moyer, RWP A #S13960; Johannes Dufendorf, RWP A #W24061; and Nicholas Dunkle, RWP A #S21164.

33. Henry Snook, RWP A #S11435.

34. Pennsylvania Packet of January 7, 1779, page 4; Wintersmith's Map.

35. Interestingly, Isaac Vrooman's "Map of the County of Albany, Tryon, and part of Charlotte made at the request of his Excellency George Washington" in 1779, shows only Fort Plank as being the only Continental Fortress in the Canajoharie District. This raises the question of why, if it existed and it was the headquarters fort, does Fort Rensselaer [or Fort Plain] not appear on the map. One should also note that Vrooman's explanation of his map states that the settlements are shown in exploded view. Finally, it also of interest to note that Vrooman, using his scale one will note that the steeple of the Reformed German Church of Canajoharie is represented to be well over three eighths of a mile or 1980 feet tall.

**Answer – The fort at Canajoharie, later known as Fort Plain and Fort Rensselaer, was actually just being built by the Fourth New York Regiment in the spring of 1779 when Vrooman drafted this map for General Washington. The new fort was said to be a haven for refugees and settlers at Canajoharie, so it probably did not amount to much at that time. Fort Plank had been built for about a year and was garrisoned by a New York Line Regiment after the destruction of Cherry Valley – so at that particular time it was considered the most important fortification in the area. A year and a half later the roles would be reversed!**

**Map icons for buildings, etc are never in scale – you wouldn't even be able to see them they would be so small. I can't believe Johnson doesn't know that. My guess is that this is an oblique attempt to question the scale and accuracy of the map, because it clearly shows Fort Plank quite a distance west of the church and well inland from the river. - W.L.**

36. Thomas Pownall's 1767 Map (Library of Congress Maps Collection); Carl

Wintersmith's Map of Upstate New York.

37. This village was located near modern day Canastota, New York.

38. Vosburgh's Records of the Lutheran St. Paul's Church in the Town of Minden.

39. Henry Glen Letterbook, NYSL.

40. Lane's Journal.

41. The Public Papers of George Clinton, Volume 5:593.

42. John M. Dake, RWPA #S19272.

43. Barber & Howe: 279-80.

44. Montgomery County Deeds, 40:355.

45. Garrett Abeel NYSL Mss. #13936.

46. Samuel Tallmadge's Orderly Book; Captain Daniel Lane's Journal.

47. Index of Revolutionary War Pension Applications in the National Archives .

48. Geradus Clute, RWPA #S23160; Peter Conrad, RWPA #W16543; Peter Walrath, RWPA #S14792; Jesse Stewart, RWPA #S23014; Moses Stewart, RWPA #S11461; and, William Van Slyke, RWPA #W2461.

49. William Berry, RWPA #S10366.

50. William Snook, RWPA #S11435.

51. Henry J. Diefendorf, RWPA #S12772.

52. Jacob J. Failing, RWPA #W21092.

53. Rutger Bleeker Papers Item #5.

54. Haldimand Papers Add Mss. #21759:40 [document #2]; Haldimand Papers Add Mss. #21760:208-9 [document #3].

55. Nicholas Dunkle, RWPA #S21164. The same pensioner also states:

*. . . that in July [of 1779] following he was again Called to Fort Plank by his said Capt, their kept on duty & at building a block house in which to place a Canon and that during this tour of Service he served fourteen days . . .*

56. Henry Murphy, RWPA #W18543. It should be noted that Captains Coapman and Diefendorf had overseen the construction of Fort Plank in the spring of 1778 (Frederick Bronner, RWPA #W477; Christopher Eckler, RWPA #R3239; Peter Eckler, RWPA #R3217; and Jacob Garlock, RWPA#S13119).

57. Tallmadge Orderly Book.

58. Henry Murphy, RWPA #W18543; and George Ransier, RWPA #S28849.

59. This post appears to have been a picket fort as evidenced by the following:

*Fort Renselear 5<sup>th</sup> Sep<sup>tr</sup> 81*

*Garrison Orders*

*Captain Livingston Captain Whelp and Lieutenant Bloodgood of the York levies and Capt Lieut Waldron of the Artillery are to consider them selves in arrest . . . they are to ~~be~~ confine Confine themselves to Quarters within the Picquets of the fort . . .* (NYSL, Mss #SC15705).

See my comments above. –W.L.

60. The Frontiersman of New York , 2:455.

61. Samuel Ludlow Frey Papers, 2:111.

62. Colonel Peter Gansevoort's Private Correspondence in the New York Public Library.

63. The Public Papers of George Clinton.

64. Ibid.

65. Sir Frederick Haldimand Papers.

66. From the above it would seem that any bill submitted to the State of New York for damages incurred to property used by the Army of the United States would be dated Fort Rensselaer.

That deduction is correct for the entity known as Fort Plain or Fort Rensselaer, and Johannes Lipe, Sr.'s bill is dated at "Fort Rensselaer." But once again Johnson's *a priori* assumption that Fort Plank and the Fort Plain blockhouse were the same entity is getting in the way. Assuming that there was an entity known *only* as Fort Plank (and never by any other name), the bill submitted could and *would* refer to "Fort Plank." Since that is exactly what Jost House's petition does, the inference is that Fort Plank had no other name. –W.L.

67. Lieutenant Abraham D. Quackenboss, RWPA #W16688.

68. Fort Plain-Nelliston History: 1850-1947 , page 2.

69. Douglas Ayres, Telephone Interview with the author on May 20, 1989.

70. Albany County, New York Clerk's Office, New Map Number 160, Old Map Number 58, Benjamin Wright's 1803 Survey of the Mohawk River.

71. The Public Papers of George Clinton, 6:169.

72. The Frontiersman of New York , 2:455. The above mentioned event is quite understandable, if one assumes that Colonel Willett was indeed aware of the location of Fort Rensselaer in relation to the premises he was ordering to be seized and used for government purposes. If not, one must question the motivation of the writer in inscribing Lieutenant Colonel Willett's express orders with the name of another fort. One must also assume that Simms, who had an established record of changing the names of places and events to substantiate his version of the facts, did not change Fort Rensselaer to Fort Plain when transcribing this document.

In the light of the unpublished Clinton Papers document it's pretty simple. Justice Nellis used the common local name "Fort Plain," but Willett was constrained by General Stirling's order to call the fort by its official name "Fort Rensselaer." It was an official document which Willett was signing so he followed orders and interlined Fort Plain and replaced it with the official name of the fort. It wasn't "another fort" – it was clearly Fort Plain/Fort Rensselaer on the Johannes, Sr. and Adam Lipe farms in Expense Lot B of the Bleecker Patent. For a change Simms got it nearly right! –W.L.

73. The above mentioned event is understandable, if one assumes that Colonel Willett was indeed aware of the location of Fort Rensselaer in relationship to the premises he was ordering to be seized for government usage. If not, one must question the motivation of the writer in inscribing Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett's express orders with the name of another fortress. One must also assume that Simms, who has a well pattern of changing the names of places and the dates of events to substantiate his own personal opinion of the facts, did not change Fort Rensselaer to FortPlain when transcribing this document.

The "premises" in question were the lands "*lying contiguous to ~~Fort Plain~~-Fort Rensselaer, being a place of defense.*" Since Simms is touting this document as a discovery which actually contradicts his own previous hypothesis regarding the identity and location of Fort Rensselaer, I rather doubt that he forged the evidence. For what purpose - to prove himself wrong?

As noted above there is - *even to this day* - someone who "*has a ... pattern of changing the names of places and the dates of events to substantiate his own personal opinion of the facts.*" Those who live in glass house .... –W.L.



74. Montgomery County Deeds, 3:162; Montgomery County Deeds, 5:520.
75. Montgomery County Deeds, 3:162.
76. Tryon County Deeds, 23.
77. Montgomery County Deeds, 46:320.
78. New York City Surrogates Wills 33:420
79. Samuel Ludlow Frey Papers, Box 5 Folder 94.
80. Rutger Bleeker Papers, Item 5.
81. Rutger Bleeker Papers, Item 13.
82. Montgomery County Deeds, 6:1.
83. Rutger Bleeker Papers, Item 14.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid; Albany County Mortgages, 2:336.
86. New York City Surrogates Wills 33:420
87. Henry Glen Papers, NYSHA.
88. Montgomery County Deeds, 3:162.
89. Wayne Lenig. "Fort Plain, Fort Plank, Fort Rensselaer, and Canajoharie". 17 Nov 2001. Page 27.
90. Ditto, page 28. He sites as his reference: "Rufus Grider, Historical Scrapbooks, microfilm, Manuscripts and Special Collections, New York State Library."
91. George Waggoner, RWPA #S23989.
92. John Yordan, RWPA #S26982.
93. (Lansing Papers, 8:10)
94. Samuel Ludlow Frey Papers, Box 5 Folder 94)
95. "Plan for the Relief and Provisioning of Fort Schuyler [1780]", NYHS.

96. Barber & Howe, Historical Collections of New York , pp. 195, 274, 279, 509.
97. William Campbell, editor. Dewitt Clinton's Private Canal Journal. Joel Munsell: Albany. 1849. Page 40. This quotation was taken from Mister Lenig's critique of "The Bloodied Mohawk " .
98. Volume Two, page 141.
99. Rutger Bleeker Papers.
100. Henry Glen Papers, NYSHA. At first glance this would suggest Fort Rensselaer was located as far north and westward as Lot 6 of the Harrison Patent; however a deed dated April 29, 1802 states that at least a portion of Lot 3 of Harrison's Patent belonged to Colonel Peter Waggoner (Montgomery County Deeds (Montgomery County Deeds 8:364). Apparently Peter allowed his son George to occupy the land during the American Revolution (Certificates of Quit Rent Remissions, Mss #A1211, Box 7816(D)). Burr's Atlas of New York also clearly suggests that Lot 3 was, in its entirety, located south of the mouth of the Otsquago Creek.
101. Colonel Peter Waggoner resided upon Lots 5 & 6 of the Harrison Patent (Certificates of Quit Rent Remissions, NYSL Mss #7816(D); however, Montgomery County Deeds 8:364, specifically shows a tract of 150 acres in Lot 3 of the Harrison Patent to have been owned by Peter Waggoner and occupied by his son George Waggoner during the war (Certificates of Quit Rent Remissions, NYSL Mss #7816(D).
102. Haldimand Papers, Add Mss #21760:318.
103. Haldimand Papers, Add Mss #21767:129.
104. In writing about the August 2<sup>nd</sup> , 1780, attack on Fort Plank, WL adds his own interpretation of the place name: *Cleysburgh, Kleysbergh, or Klaisbergh, by employing the "high Dutch" [sic: German] word "Clawburgh" to make the case that this place was also known as "Clay Hill"* . However, if one consults a German Dictionary they will find that there is a distinct difference between the words "berg" and "burg". The Berg spelling refers to a fortress or castle while the word "Burg" other refers to a mountain; a significant difference in meaning depending on the spelling. Could the name Kleysburgh instead refer to Kley's Castle or settlement?! We will probably never know.
105. Ensign Derick Van Vechten, RWPA #S23047.
106. William Feeter, RWPA #S13013.
107. Daybold Moyer, RWPA #W15789.
108. Draper Papers, 20F:12.
109. Daniel McGraw, RWPA #S9947.

110. The 1799 Tax Assessment Roll of the Town of Canajoharie found within the New York State Archives in Albany, New York.
111. Military Papers of Peter Gansevoort.
112. Montgomery County, NY Deed 5:360.
113. Albany County Mortgage, 2:336; Montgomery County Wills, 1:311; Montgomery County Deeds, 15:101 & 15:103; The Public Papers of George Clinton, 6:694, 6:698, 6:699.
114. Henry E. Huntington Library, Mss Map #15440.
115. Public Archives of Canada Record Group Ten: Volume One: Page 349).
116. Public Archives of Canada Record Group Ten: Volume One: Page 250a).
117. The Commissioners of Forfeitures Maps from the New York State Library, Albany, New York.
118. Letter signed by Alexander Thompson, and addressed to his brother on February 24, 1783, housed in Washington's Headquarters, Newburgh, New York. Transcript taken from the S. L. Frey Papers in the New York State Library.
119. Willett Letterbook, NYSL Mss #SC15705. A marquee: is a large tent often used by senior officers (Webster's Dictionary, et al).
120. Fort Plank is mentioned five times, between November 14, 1778 and August 1, 1782: Fort Plain, once, on December 19, 1784; and Fort Rensselaer nine times, between November 2, 1781 and 1785. All of these references are located in the Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789. Interestingly, Fort Plank is mentioned on the same date, August 1, 1782 thus proving they were not one and the same.
121. Haldimand Papers, Add Mss #21787:184.
122. The Public Papers of George Clinton, 6:692.
123. The Public Papers of George Clinton, 7:327.
124. Willett Letterbook, NYSL Mss #SC15705.
125. One must note that after the Battle of Klock's and Failing's Field on October 19, 1780 the name of Robert Van Rensselaer was greatly loathed by the inhabitants of the Mohawk Valley (Simms) and is still so even today [2000]. Thus, it hardly seems likely that many persons, if any, would voluntarily conform to calling Fort Plain, or the Village, Fort Rensselaer in honor of a man so despised.

126. John Barr's Journal.

127. During the American Revolution the Reverend's brother, Lawrence Gross, resided upon 100 acres & 3 roods of land in Lot 14 of the 1739 Division of the Bleeker Patent and on 48 acres in Lot 15 of the [1739] Division of the Bleeker Patent (Garret Y. Lansing Papers, Box 8:10).

128. Conrad Edick, RWPA #W2084; and, Eliphalet Kellogg, RWPA #S2692.

129. Orderly Book of Captain Moses Dusten of the Second New Hampshire Regiment, NYSL Mss #11391.

130. Lawrence Tremper's Journal in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

131. For an overview of the locations of the various land patents herein mentioned.

132. Haldimand Papers, Add Mss #21767:109.

133. Nicholas Countryman, RWPA #R2367; Johannes Duesler, RWPA #W16244; Cornelius Van Camp, RWPA #W19569; the Personal Papers of Peter Gansevoort, NYPL.

134. Montgomery County Deeds, 8:470.

135. Haldimand Papers, Add Mss #21767:109.

136. Henry Glen Papers, NYSHA.

137. The Public Papers of George Clinton, 6:789-90.

138. Montgomery County Deeds, 8:470; Montgomery County Deeds, 19:289; and Montgomery County Mortgage, 3:12-7

139. Tryon County Deeds: 53.

140. Homestead Lot One of the 1730 Bleeker Patent.

141. Philip Schuyler Papers.

142. 1764 Van Horne Patent Map, & Garret Y. Lansing Papers Box 9:4.

143. Tryon County Deeds: 23.

144. Montgomery Deeds, 16:411.

145. 1764 Van Horne Patent Map.

146. Will of Delia Blank, Montgomery County Wills, 1:283; Montgomery County Land

Deeds, 13:400. The interaction between Jost House [Sr.] and Henry Walrath in the Sanders Brother's Account Books, and between Captain Jost House and Henry Walrath in commanding a company of the Canajoharie District Regiment of Militia, appears to suggest Henry Walrath and Jost House were neighbors.

Well they were neighbors as well as fellow officers in the same militia company, but in those days 2 miles away was still a *close* neighbor –W.L.

147. Vosburg's Church Records; The Frontiersmen of New York, 2:362 .

148. Jacob Garlock, RWPA #S13119; Cornelius Van Camp, RWPA #W19569; Peter Eckler, RWPA #R3239; Peter Young, RWPA #S11922; and Robert H. Wendell, RWPA #R11321.

149. The Public Papers of George Clinton, 6:77; John Etting, RWPA #W19231; and Robert H. Wendell, RWPA #R11321.

150. Countryman Genealogy, 115.

151. Willett's Letterbook, NYSL Mss #SC15705.

152. Tryon County Deeds: 53.

153. Robert H. Wendell, RWPA #R11321.

154. [Robert Van Rensselaer], Manuscript plan to resupply Fort Schuyler.

155. Assuming the darkened diamond on the Bleeker Patent Map Number 4 designates a fort site.

Ah – the “darkened diamond” again! Phantoms everywhere and what do they mean? Such mystery - I love it.

156. On November 4, 1991 the author received a letter from Mrs. Lora M. Bowman of Franksville, Wisconsin, in which she stated she was born and raised in the Mohawk Valley. In late June of 2005, David Manclow, Minden Township, Montgomery County, New York Historian, informed the author that prior to his Douglas Ayres, had informed him that it was the "Lipe Family" that had removed the Sand Hill Gravestones.

157. In one of his many visits with the author, Mr. Luft stated the gravestones were removed by Mr. Irvin Klock and transported to his dairy farm across Route 5S to fill in a small ravine. To date no attempt has been made to excavate any of the stones from the barnyard.

158. Beer's History of Montgomery And Fulton Counties, N.Y. , demonstrates that this is indeed the grave of Robert McFarlan, assuming that the stone was not molested prior to 1878, for on page 131, it is stated:



*On a marble slab in the old graveyard attached to the Sand Hill may yet still be seen although it is half down the following inscription: "In memory of Robert McFarlan, Esq., who departed this life July 14, 1813, in the 49<sup>th</sup> year of his life."*

Doesn't it seem a little odd that the one gravestone that Beers mentioned in 1878 is *coincidentally* the same stone that Mr. Johnson found there in 1991. I think I would consider the possibility that either those other headstones were removed prior to 1878 and the graves perhaps even re-interred in the current Fort Plain Cemetery; or possibly there never were any other headstones and the whole "Sand Hill Cemetery" story is a myth. – W.L.