

Albany 29<sup>th</sup> Novr 1782

Sir

*I have thought much of your excellencies plan since I left you and the more I think if it the more I like it \_ I think no enterprise of the kind can bid fairer for success Indeed it appears to me with some very Cross Intervention It must Succeed if it is properly managed \_\_ For my own part I can only assure your excellency that I shall be supremely happy in the execution of a plan that bids so fair to terminate with advantage The prospect is Daring and I find as much Anxiety as is necessary to accomplish so desirable a piece of Service. Your Excellencies ~~smar~~ observation of Secrecy being an essential Ingredient in the performance of this business as Makes the first and most Important Article ~~in this business~~ and Your remark of the Danger of having even a Third person let into the knowledge of it shows how much Vallue must to be set upon this arcane of the business - - This being the case all the measures necessary to be taken are to be formed in such a way as to keep the design completely concealed - This is the work therefor which has taken up my thoughts The preperations necessary are to be made in a way that will afford least suspicion - - I shall Just mention ~~those~~ such Materials ~~that~~ as I conceive necessary for the enterprise - - And First I should suppose 550 men ought to be employed in the works, There — If your excellency should think proper I would wish one half of the men were taken from the Rhode Island reg<sup>t</sup> and the other half from our three years State troops But these troops are not yet Clothed - I could therefor e earnestly wish that the Clothing might be forwarded soon as possible - - As without their Clothing I cant conceive it possible for them to participate in the*

*business ~~And this I could be very long for an~~ where to be deprived of would be cause of much regre[torn] - If it could be procured I think it would be well for if every man who goes on this service to have a Coat A Vest a pair of Woolen overalls a pr stockings a Wollen Cap a pair of Mittens And in the place of the common shoes I should think it necessary to have either the Indian or Canadian Shoes and Socks - Their Shoes and Socks cannot cost as much as the Common shoes and are much the better for a Cold Country besides were Snow Shoes are used the Common Shoe will not do - - And I think if they could ~~be they~~ be procured it would be well for every man to have a pair of Snow Shoes ~~as there is no telling for~~*

*notwithstanding the march is to be performed in Slays something may turn up to make it necessary to maneuver the ~~march~~ whole party on foot in which case Snow Shoes would be Essential - The Cost of Snow Shoes is but trifling Especially if we was to provide the hides and get the Indians to make them at any rate some snow Shoes must be provided for the troops in this Quarter as it is not possible to keep out Scouts without them And should your Excellencies plan be put in execution it would be of very great service to send a party of ~~small~~ smart men on Snow Shoes a day before to [torn]ce the path, And the marching of a few men on [torn] Snow Shoes is the best way I know of to break a road for Slays were the Snow is deep \_ Now Sir I must beg leave to remind your excellency that ~~as much~~ such of these thing as your excelle[torn]y may Join with me in conceiving ought to procured it will be for your excellency to give directions about in such a way as you may conceive best Calculated to conceal the design - - ~~With respect to the Slays I am Inclined to think some streak of power will be necessary in order to have to have them Collected - Whether it would be proper to direct the Q' Master to assi[torn] in procuring Slays or whether this part of the~~*

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*business may not be left with me I ~~shall~~ beg to submit to your consideration if the Q' Master should receive orders to perform this business any time before ~~it is done~~ hand the door of discovery will be open - I have thought whether it would not do ~~for~~ to have the troops when they become detached for the expedition ~~to be~~ ordered to obscure places in Companies along the Mohawk river And ~~each Officer [unreadable]~~ having previously the names of ~~each~~ such persons as are known to have horses and Slays let each officer Commanding a Company have the names of such persons as are Intended to furnish Slays for his Company with orders to take those horses & Slays with a Driver to each And as many Days forage as may be necessary And Repair to the German flats at which place It would be [an unreadable word in the crease] be best possible to have the whole detachment Victualled - that being our advanced post And will be most Convenient for a ~~ptace~~ General Rendezvous - These Orders*

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*may be given to each Officer Commanding a Company separately and executed in such a way as will not at first discover the Strength of the party And ~~may~~ the design may be keep out of Sight by giving out to the*

*Officers Commanding Compan respectively that they are going to Fort Schuyler to bring down Stores that were left at that place when it was evacuated - - And it is A truth ~~that is~~ pretty well known that when that place was abanded there were a number of Shot Left in the woods about a mile or two below it - A good time to put the Enterprise In Execution I Judge think will be late January As ~~previous to that time~~ the Ice is seldom ~~of one~~ rarely to be trusted before that time - -*

*Public Service*

*His Excellency General Washington*

*Head Quarter  
New Burgh*

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[Willett Family Papers NYSL SC16670 Box 1 Folder 15]

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*Albany December 16<sup>th</sup> 1782*

*Sir*

*Your Letter of the 13<sup>th</sup> Instant enclosing th[piece missing] return of you [piece missing] Regiment I have received \_\_\_ Considering the diminution of Y [piece missing] comman [piece missing] the discharge of the Levies and the advanced season of the [piece missing]ar you may withdraw the Company from Johnstown with the piece of Artilery and Officer and Men belonging to it leaving an observing Officer and a small party, [piece missing] watch the conduct of the Tories at that place, and in its vicinity, that no bad consequences may follow from any combination they may be disposed t[piece missing] form.*

*If there are an Levies in your Regiment whose tim[piece missing] of service*

*Surpass the first of January please to make me a return of them and what periods they respectively expire*

*I am Sir*

*Your very Humble Servant*

*Sterling*

*Colonel Willett*

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F. Rensselaer 22<sup>d</sup> Dec<sup>r</sup> 82

Sir

From Albany I wrote to your excellency on the prosecution of the plan prose[ed] by you when I was at Head Quarters I there promised to endeavour at enquires on th [piece missing] after my arrival at this place And altho I have not been able to Complete my enquiries so pointed without affording [**room for surmise as to determine**] on the exact rout which would be best Yet I am pretty Clear that the March may be accomplished It is true I have found out some obstacles which I was n[ot] before acquainted with such as the Uncertainty of the Sufficient Ice in the some rivers laying on the most direct and easy route. Yet this matter I shall be to discover in time and should Ice fail on those routs ~~they can~~ [piece missing] other routes which may be taken tho attended with some dificulties - Dificulties however which if I humbly conceive ought not to supersede the attempt - An attempt which I am very desirous of making —

The Fort is a regular built fortification Lying on the North Side of the river Consisting of Five angles ~~about 100 paces each~~ And with a Bastion to each angle The Angles are all of one length supposed about 100 paces - The Ditch is about 30 feet wide and Nine feet deep from the bottom of the Ditch to the top of the Paraput is about is about 30 feet except the Angles were the Sally port is fixed [piece missing] were it is 20 feet - Ther is a row of perpendicular pickets in the center of the Ditch and a row of Horisontal Pickets along the wall about for

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[piece missing] 6 feet above the Berm — The Gate way secured by a Draw bridge. At the entrance of the Gate on one Side is the Guard ho[use] and on the other side a house for the Comm[andant] Under Within one of the Bastions is placed the M[aga]zine in the other four Bastions and [**Curtains**] are filed with Barraks which are made [of] Logs [piece missing]elis of t[piece missing] are fro[piece missing] e were [**All of the buildings are said to be Bum proof Three of the Angles of the Fort front the Lake as the River**] And in some places [**lay very**] near to those waters — It is not Improbable but the Ditch may be nearly Covered filled with Snow - The most familiar way however to assend the wall it appears to me would be to Lay boards from the Paraput of the Glacis to the top of the Picket which are placed in the Ditch and on top of those boards the feet of the Ladders might stand. In this way Ladders of about 14 feet I think would answer the purpose - I should suppose a half dosen of those Ladders would not be too many — And that might be easily placed together [wi]th a few boards in the Bottom of the Slays

The season at present in this Quarter is remarkbaly open - I have been thinking about the 12 [**or 13th**] of Feb<sup>ry</sup> would be sufficiently early to put the affairs in execution and I would p[itch on] one those days [on] account of ben[e]fiting by the moon which will then [**sett be**] tween 3 & 5 oC in the morning so that we may profit by its Light in our march & execute the business Just after it has withdrawn its light at which time it is Generally

*darkest so that we may hope to approach the river undiscovered —*

[the right-hand corner of the document where Lieutenant Colonel Willett's autograph signature normally appears has been carefully ripped from the original document, most probably by an early autograph collector: KDJ. The text herein entered in brackets and shown in ***italicized bold text*** was taken from the final copy of Lieutenant Colonel Willett's letter which was sent to His Excellency George Washington and found within the George Washington's Papers of the Library of Congress. & is dated *Fort Rensselaer Decem<sup>r</sup> 1782*]

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*Colonel Marinus Willett  
Fort Rensselaer*

*Sterling*

<i>1000 [Catreen town?]</i>	<i>1000 [levies or Men]</i>
<i>Doctor Strayer</i>	<i>500 &amp;c</i>
<i>Lush &amp; Lansing</i>	<i><u>1000</u></i>
	<i>2500</i>

*Description  
10<sup>th</sup> Dec<sup>r</sup>  
Fort Oswego and Copy  
of a Letter by W  
24<sup>th</sup> Dec 82*

[Willett Family Papers NYSL SC16670 Box 1 Folder 18]

*Fort Herkemer 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 7 83*

*Sir*

*Thus far we got and After a Variety of Difficulties are furnished with every thing necessary to proceed in our march I expect we shall camp for the night ten ~~or~~ fifteen Miles above this. If too many horses don't give nor any other Insurmountable obstacle occur I hope to be able to execute the business at the time mentioned in your Excellencies Letter of the 2<sup>d</sup> Instant — The mode that has been taken to procure ~~our~~ the Sleighs ~~Have to h~~ has Laid us open to legal prosecutions. ~~Unless There for~~ ~~executions however may be avoided by a Warrant from your Excellency the Governor of the State, Where authorised~~ This a matter I did not advert to untill after I had sent*

*of my last letter from Albany and then it was too late or I should have applied to your Excellency for a warrant of Impress which by the Laws of Our State would have prevented the possibility of Danger ~~of such an~~ of any such kind of prosecution If however it may not be received In proper time I could with your excellency still be provedd such a warrant was Dated previous to the Sixth of this Instant when the Impresses were begun below*

[written in Marinus Willett's hand: KDJ]

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[Willett Family Papers NYSL SC16670 Box 1 Folder 17]

Schonectady 6<sup>th</sup> Feb..7 1783..

My dear Sir

4.. Oclock PM

*Yours by Captain Fonda Came save to hand & have opserved your meaning I am unhapy I have not seen You Going & Coming from home Yesterday my Business Called me to Alb<sup>y</sup> where I Called at your Brothers But you were Gone and took it when I got home you had Gone Above this place I Got home at Eight OClock \_ The moment I Rec<sup>d</sup> yours I whent for the Incampment ware my Regiment Lys I Got Jonjost & Captain John a Very prudent savage & a man that Can depend<sup>d</sup> on Ready for the for the Randevous You had order<sup>d</sup> which is F Renselier who I now send to You & Flatter my self will Answer our hand they are both Trouble some when in Liquor perticuler Jonjost who when drunk Not ley his Sincier Vaules are the Conjectures since you have past this City & the More so since a Number of slays with Armed men Past Likewise*

*As the matter of the troops marching from the North to the westward Gives a large field  
for Conjecture I must think tho. No Great thinker my self if their was Some thing in the wind*

*Should that be the Cause No men shell be more happyier to learn the Success of this  
Expedition then your truley friend if its not Connected with the duty you owe your Country to tell me by a line before you Department & Conveyed me by a save hand I am Equally Contented shall pray our save Return to one who is Near & dear who in M<sup>s</sup> Willott & more friend<sup>s</sup> I must Concluded with my Best wishes for your save Return if you Go & at all times my wishes will Attend you ware Ever you Go I will all most Insure you Success should you to the part of O. If you Carry your Slays as far as west End of ondia Leake & no forther \_ three days after that will do the Job & two back too the slays — I am with the Greatest Sincerity your [a blotted out word] & Very humble Serv*

H Glen

To Col. Willott & &

at home the Chief of the enemies are on the Hunt

H Glen

Colonel M Willott Commanding  
The Troops westward

Tryon County  
Fort Renselier

by Capt John &  
Jonjost 2 Indians

PS .. Since writing this Letter Jonjost Got in the Frowlking a[torn]sy & unfitt to Go for  
which I have obtained a[torn] other one in his place whos name is Peter St[torn]ongly  
Recommand by the Scsham

[endorsement on reverse]

Letter from H Glen Esq  
with the Indian  
Guides 7<sup>th</sup> Feb<sup>y</sup> 1783

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Fort Renselear 20<sup>th</sup> Feb<sup>y</sup> 1783

Sir

Having received orders form the Commander in Chief to attempt the  
Reduction of the Garrison at Oswego by Suprise I set out from Fort Herkimer on the 8<sup>th</sup>  
In<sup>t</sup> with a Detachment of near 500 men Composed one half of the Rode Island & the other  
half of our State troops and after Surmounting a Variety of obstacles we arrived on the  
Morning of the twelfth Instant in the Neighbourhood of oswego Fall Were we provided  
Ladders and made the necessary disposition for the Assault which was to have taken place  
at 4 O Clock the ~~Succeeding~~ next Morning – 8 OC in the Evening we Ventured to take the  
Ice about 3 miles below the falls and proceeded without being discovered to a point  
within 4 Miles of oswego were the Ice failing we were obliged to take the Shore Among  
the Guides I had taken Cap<sup>t</sup> John and two other Indians of the Oneida tribe. Cap<sup>t</sup> John is  
a very smart expert Indian & has ever acted the part of a Steady friend to Our Cause. The  
Guides in General had all along submitted to the Superior Skill of Cap<sup>t</sup> John & hither to  
he had piloted us well - It was not Eleven Oclock when we Left the Ice and entered into

*the wood - And Captain John told me he would take us to a wood road not above two miles from the Fort by Midnight hence it appeared Clear that we had plenty of time on hand. Notwithstanding which I hastened on the troops And never men discovered more chearfulness then the troops in General did while they moved on briskly through a deep Snow and over Several hills and Marshes Making the ladders which on any other occasion would have been an Intolerable Incumbrance - move on with great care untill two oClock - When from the Irregular Movements of the Pilot - It appeared Clear that we were going wrong - - I was some distance in front of when I got these suspicions verified And on Collecting the whole of my Guides together I found not one of em knew were we Where. In this Mortyfing Situation every attempt to endeavour to find the way to Oswego in time proved abortive in the place of having got nearer it became evident that ~~since~~ from the time we left the Ice we had been drawing further of from Oswego - - Thus was our time was wasted and the Day broke in upon us before we could possibly recover the horred blunder we had been led into by the Wretshed mismanagement of our Guide. And our prospects which at 11 OC had risen to a degrss of Certainty of the Greatest assurance of success were Intirly destroyed for as we had no expectation of being able to do any thing unless we could have no hope of Concealing ouselves in the Situation we then was hope gave way to despondency And the Spirits of the Troops which hereto had been Supported by the pleasing prospects of Success. Now Sunck under the Severity of their fatigue - One Sentence in my Instructions was this "It is to be remembered and I ~~desire~~ wish to Impress it upon you that if you do not succeed by Surprise the attempt will be Unwarrantable ." In this Mortified and Cruelly Baffled - Situation We had nothing further to do but return Which Considering the Amazingly fatigued State of the troops and that a number of em were badly frosted was performed in as good Order as Could be expected - One of the Rhode Island regt and one of our State Soldiers by leaving their ranks and Laying ~~out~~ down was killed with the Cold - The rest of the troops have all returnd safe ~~except~~ but a number of em lame - I have thought proper to give your excellency this act of our disapointed expedition notwithstanding the painfulness of the eflection of being deprived of the fine prospects we had of rendering service to our Country & Achieving som thing for ourselves by such a deplorable Blundr - - This # expedition has been an ample tryal of our Soldiers and I have found that in every respect they are a match for the most Veteran troops we have . With respect to their fortitude on the march & the regularity of their whole Military deportment your Excellency my rely on it they were not out done by the troops of the other reg<sup>t</sup>*

*In the beginning of Jan<sup>y</sup> Last I sent Your Excellency by Major Finck a particular State of our troops raised on bounties of Land - I was in paper every Material your Excellency might require would have been contained in that ac<sup>t</sup> I am Verbally Informed some other returns are wanting The preparations for Our Late disapointed expedition engrossed my Attention so as to prevent my sending you a Copy of our Last monthly return I shall take care to forward Your Excellency a return ~~of our regt for this month in~~ a our State troops in a few days*

*I have the honor to be &*  
*His Excellency* *M Willett*  
*Gov<sup>r</sup> Clinton -*

(Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett's 1781-3 Memorandum Book, Compliments of the New-York Historical Society, New York, New York).

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[HEMAN CHAPMAN, RWPA #S16076. He was born on 1764 in the Town of Sharon, Litchfield County, Connecticut. He served as a private in Captain James Cannon's Company of Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett's Corps from May of 1782 through the War's end. Of the Willett's February, 1783 Oswego Expedition he testified on May 4, 1833, that . . . *Fort Plain and Herkimer were but a small distance apart went to Oswego or near it was in the winter the formost went on Snow Shoes untill it was hard enough to bear men without them then the footmen and then the teams followed It was said by our spy and guide an Indian that we had passed by the Fort that Captain John told two other India[ns] to meet him at a particular place directing them to go one way with the troops which they did when they met he informed them that they were passed the fort Capt John's breath smelt of Rum they suspected him of being treacherous and supposing that he had been to the enemy's fort was put under gard the wach word or signal was York - Town if the answer was Town we were to let him pass or he was a friend we returned to Fort Plain . . .* On November 24, 1834, Mister Chapman testified that . . . *when we went to oswego in my last service it must have been near the close of the war because the soldiers were angry with Col. Willet for taking them to Oswego had heard that peace was about to take place and believed that Col. Willet done it for the purpose of getting a great name when, the troops got back to Herkemer Col. Willet left the troops and went on to Albany some of the soldiers say'd he was afraid to stay with them, while here we heard the news of Peace shortly after went to Schenectady and I believe got our discharges at Schenectady I remember the names of two sergeants that they were Hessians named Houseman & Smith a corporal named miller Privates named Wan Rhinehart Jacob Lusk Caleb Forgason and Thomas Orchard Ichabod Tubs & John Meed were in the nine months service . . .]*

**THE RECOLLECTIONS OF OTHER SURVIVORS**

**WILLIAMS AVERY**, RWPA #S12020. He states that Lieutenant Rial Bigham of Newell's Company commanded a group of Stockbridge Indians whom served Willett as rangers. He states that he spent the winter of 1782/3 in Fort Plain. In the winter of 1782/3 he took part in Willett's failed Oswego Expedition and says that they were fired upon by the enemy about five miles east of Fort Oswego during their retreat. He states that his feet were frozen in the failed expedition by his standing guard upon a high log.

**ROBERT AYRES**, RWPA #W20648. He served as a private in Captain Job Wright's Company of Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett's Regiment in 1782 and from marched out from Fort Plain on the failed Oswego Expedition. He states they were joined in there march towards Oswego at Fort Herkimer by a regiment from the Colony of Rhode Island.

**JOHN BARNES**, RWPA #S23110. His file contains a deposition by Peter Hendrickson who states that he served with John in Willett's Corps until the time of the Oswego Expedition in which he, Peter, had his feet frozen.

**HENRY BULSON**, RWPA #S12373. He took part in the Willett's Oswego Expedition and states they were joined in the expedition by a regiment of troops from Rhode Island whose commissioned officers were white, but the noncommissioned officers were all blacks.

**JAMES CAMPBELL**, RWPA #S2110. He enlisted as a private in Captain Job Wright's Company of Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett's Corps in March of 1781 and was stationed at Fort Plain on the Mohawk River about twenty miles as near as this Deponent recollects below the mouth of West Canada Creek. . . . He states that of the Oswego Expedition he . . . *well recollects that during this expedition he was three days without sustenance except the buds he picked from trees -- . . .*

**HEMAN CHAPMAN**, RWPA #S16076. Of the Willett's February, 1783 Oswego Expedition he testified on May 4, 1833, that . . . *Fort Plain and Herkimer were but a small distance apart went to Oswego or near it was in the winter the formost went on Snow Shoes untill it was hard enough to bear men without them then the footmen and then the teams followed It was said by our spy and guide an Indian that we had passed by the Fort that Captain John told two other India[ns] to meet him at a particular place directing them to go one way with the troops which they did when they met he informed them that they were passed the fort Capt John's breath smelt of Rum they suspected him of being treacherous and supposing that he had been to the enemy's fort was put under gard the wach word or signal was York - Town if the answer was Town we were to let him pass or he was a friend we returned to Fort Plain . . .* On November 24, 1834, Mister Chapman testified that . . . *when*

*we went to Oswego in my last service it must have been near the close of the war because the soldiers were angry with Col. Willet for taking them to Oswego had heard that peace was about to take place and believed that Col. Willet done it for the purpose of getting a great name when, the troops got back to Herkemer Col. Willet left the troops and went on to Albany some of the soldiers say'd he was afraid to stay with them, while here we heard the news of Peace shortly after went to Schenectady and I believe got our discharges at Schenectady I remember the names of two sergeants that they were Hessians named Houseman & Smith a corporal named miller Privates named Wan Rhinehart Jacob Lusk Caleb Forgason and Thomas Orchard Ichabod Tubs & John Meed were in the nine months service . . .*

**CHRISTOPHER COATS**, RWPA #12515. *Of the Oswego Expedition Coats stated . . . “He immediately enlisted again for the term of three years in the same company and was stationed at Fort Plain and occasionally at Fort Herkimer. Was at Fort Plain when the news of Peace reached that place, he however was not discharged but continued on duty until January 1784 when he received a discharge in the City of Albany from his Colonel, while on duty on his last enlistment he marched under Col. Willet for Oswego on lake Ontario then in possession of the enemy for the purpose of taking that place on this expedition they hired an (Oneida) Indian pilot or guide by the name of Captain John, they marched five or six days when it was ascertained that their Indian guide had deceived them and they returned having been absent about 10 days . . .*

**DAVID COLVER**, RWPA #S17358. He states that . . . *Majors Fink and Benscoten Adjutant Funday Lieutenant Wheaton [sic] commanded the forlorn Hope in the expedition against Oswego . . . He also notes that a regiment from Rhode Island joined them in their march to Oswego.*

**JACOB COONS**, RWPA #R2291. In December of 1782, he, another private, and a Sergeant \_\_\_\_\_ Savage were sent on snow shoes to Oswego as spies. After his return from Oswego, Willett and his entourage left for Oswego to attack it.

**IMMANUEL DEAKE**, RWPA #S16105. That the . . . *Declarent was during this enlistment at fort Plain & at a small place called fort Schuyler. Declarent cannot state at which of the last named places he was at first – Declarent well recollects that when he was ~~at~~ one time at Fort Herkimer a reinforcement said to have been a part of the Rhode Island regiment, joined the part of Col. Willets Regiment to which declarent belonged & went from thence to fort Stanwix & then arranged to go to Oswego — Declarent believes there were five Companys of Col. Willets regiment that started for Oswego – He cannot recollect how many there were of the Rhode Island reinforcements. Declarent well recollects that this was in the dead of winter – There were Indian guides employed – one he thinks was called Capt John, they traveled*

*several days through the snow towards, they Set supposed, towards Oswego. A great number of, said to have been five hundred, persons went ahead on snow shoes – That instead of leading the army to Oswego, the guides led ~~the~~ us into a swamp about nine miles, it was afterwards ascertained, from Oswego. After it was found out that we were misled fires were built to warm us, when it was ascertained that a great number were frozen considerably – a great many died & one company, mostly colored persons, nearly all died – when we started on our return to fort Stanwix our provisions were nearly all exhausted & the last five days before we arrived at fort Stanwix we had not provisions except dead horse flesh, or something of that kind. A great number of persons died on this expedition – At Oswego there lay some British forces under command of Maj Ross. Two of the Indian guides were supposed to perished. When on our return near Oneida Lake declarent was ordered to see to setting & taking care of the guard & after setting the guard declarent saw some men on top of the Hill, but as we were exposed no noise was made, lest the enemy should discover us in our reduced situation for if they had done so we could have been easily taken. Declarent afterwards learned that the British sergeant of the guard saw us but hid himself behind an elm tree & did not communicate to his friends what he had seen & that soon after he & a fifer deserted & joined us at fort Herkimer.*

**GIDEON ELIOT**, RWPA #W4189. He was born in the Town of Preston in [edit] County, Connecticut in 1763. He married Hannah Lambart in the Town of Meredith, Delaware County, New York on October 23, 1835. He states that on February 8, 1783 he marched with the whole of Willett's Corps for Fort Oswego with 100 pressed teams. They passed through what is now Utica, Whiteborough & Rome, then down the Wood Creek to the head of Lake Oneida . . . *There in the dead of the night after having traveled all day the troops were all loaded unto sleighs - & crossed the lake on the ice in the night a distance of 36 miles – In the morning they left the Sleigh and marched all the next day - the desire of the Col was to reach the Fort at dawn of day the next morning - He however failed - Was an hour too late - & returned to the Sleighs & then to Fort Plains again - the expedition failed – many of the soldiers froze – They fed on their return on the bones – which they had picked and thrown away – on their way up . . .*

**EDWARD EVANS**, RWPA #S3487. He took part in Willett's Oswego Expedition of 1783. He states that in the Oswego Expedition, they were guided by the Indian named Captain John who misled them into an unfrozen swamp.

**BENJAMIN GAUSS**, RWPA #S13125. He states he froze his toes while engaged in Willett's Oswego Expedition.

**JOHN P. GRAMPS**, RWPA #W17959. That in February of 1783, her husband with his horses and sleigh were impressed to go with Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett to lay siege

on Fort Oswego. Peter Sits states Gramps was pressed into service with his team for the Oswego Campaign. William Feeter states that his, Feeter's, brother-in-law, Martin Leffler of Albany Bush (in the neighborhood of Johnstown and Tripes Hill) accompanied Gramps and the militia in the Oswego Expedition with his team and sleigh. That he, Feeter, was told that . . . *when they came in the vicinity of Fort Oswego left their sleighs and were piloted towards the Fort on foot and Snow Shoes and were misled by their pilot and conducted in a different direction from the Fort and the men having become unable to proceed from Cold and suffering were compelled to return to their sleighs and return home and the expedition entirely failed -- That many of the men were badly frozen -- That another reason for believing that the men who accompanied this Expedition with their Sleighs carried with them also their arms and performed the usual duties of the soldier is that during said War . . .*

**AMOS HAMLIN**, RWPA #S28755. Amos states In February of 1783, he states that Willett's Corps was joined by a Regiment of Continentals from Rhode Island [Onley's Regiment of Negroes] and marched towards out to attack Fort Oswego.

**EBENEZER HATCH**, RWPA #R4736. He states that on April 7, 1778 he joined either a company commanded by one Robertson or Robinson [? Peter Van Rensselaer] while Hillsdale Township, Columbia County, New York and from there he was marched to Fort Stanwix by way of Albany and Fort Schuyler. At Fort Stanwix he states that the said captain became ill and was replaced by First Lieutenant Peter Loop of the same company of Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett's Corps. He states that . . . *he remained at Fort Stanwix until about the first of Dec. when I volunteered with about 1500 men to go to Oswego with Col. Willett - I think my Captains name on this expedition was Aaron Hale - Reuben Crippen was my orderly sergeant - After preparing a large quantity of snow shoes &c we started on our expedition I think about the 20<sup>th</sup> of Jan'y 1779 and after traversing a dreary wilderness by way of Oneida Lake and encountering almost incredible hardships exposed to all the inclemencies of a dreary northern winter & losing several of our teams we finally succeeded in reaching Oswego sometime in the month of Feb 1779 where we found the British in the possession the Fort at that place; and for some Cause, to me unknown, Col. Willett declined attacking the Fort and returned with all his troops that survived to Fort Stanwix - On our return 53 men perished in one night on the Oneida Lake - A short time after our arrival at Fort Stanwix I think in the month of March, I had a written discharge from Col. Willett & returned home after an absence of nearly one year . . .* [Hatch's service cannot be verified, nor can the commission of a Robertson or Robinson in Willett's Corps can be found: KDJ].

**SAMUEL HOSFORD**, RWPA #S13430. While in Captain Job Wright's Company of Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett's Corps of Levies, in the winter of 1783, he states that he and a party of Invalids were left at Fort Herkimer to protect it while Willett's Corps marched against Fort Oswego.

**EDWARD HUDSON**, RWPA #W15915. Conrad Mower states that Philip Stowits was killed in the Battle of Oriskany. He states he served with Hudson in Captain Garret Putman's Company of Willett's Corps and that they both marched in Willett's failed Oswego Expedition in 1783.

**SAMUEL JOY**. He served as a private in Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett's Regiment and received a one-third invalid's pension in result of having frozen his feet in Willett's Oswego Expedition of February, 1782 (M1062, frame 0400).

**JOHN KALB**. He also served in Captain Anthony Phelps's Company of Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett's Corps and lost some of his toes to frostbite in Willett's failed Oswego Expedition of January of 1783 [Volume 15 of Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York, Berthoud Fernow, Editor, page 226].

**AMOS KINNEY**, RWPA #W26730. He took part in the Oswego Expedition.

**WILLIAM FREDERICK LENSS**, RWPA #R6300. He states that he was among the advance guard in Willett's Oswego Expedition.

**ELIJAH LEWIS**, RWPA #S22353. He states that he marched in the Oswego Expedition of 1783 along with Willett's Corps and Colonel Jeremiah Olney's Regiment.

**JACOB LUSK**, RWPA #S29302. In 1782, he enlisted in Captain James Cannon's Company and *was mustered at Albany by a man named Lansing I think, and Received from him a Certificate for five hundred acres of Bounty Lands, Marched to Schoharie lay a short time at the lower fort and then marched to the upper fort and staid there through the Summer in the fall marched to fort Plain from thence to Johnstown Continued there till the beginning of Winter then marched to fort plain where he was inoculated for the Small pox and that he was next marched to Herkimer Staid there untill the first of February 1783 a Rhode Island Regiment Joined Us here A detachment was ordered to March to Reduce Oswego A fort on lake Ontario Col Willets Regiment all went across L Onid Lake in Sleighs then left them were misled by our Pilot and were Obliged to return to Herkimer much frozen And Starved and that he remained at Herkimer untill Spring when an officer arrived from the East with news of peace and that he staid at Herkimer and other places near through the Summer was at fort Plain when General Washington Came then went as one of a Guard with the General to fort Stanwix and returned with him to ~~fort Plain~~ Herkimer Late in the fall the Regiment marched to Schenectady and there Staid until the first of January 1784 when we were discharged . . .*

**WILLIAM MILES**, RWPA #S28813. In February of 1783 he took part in Willett's failed Oswego Expedition. Of the aforesaid operation he states that they ate their last provisions at

the Oswego Falls and proceeded down the Oswego River before the pilots became bewildered. He states many of Willett's Corps died of frostbite and he himself was disabled by frostbite for three months.

**MOSES PARR**, RWPA #S18149. On February 2, 1783 he took part in Willett's Oswego Expedition along with Colonel Jeremiah Onley's Regiment of Rhode Island Troops.

**DAVID PERRY**, RWPA #W2643. In February of 1783 he states they were marched from Canajoharie to Duanesburgh, Currysburg, and adjacent areas and joined with twenty to thirty wagon teams which then proceeded on to Fort Herkimer where they were joined by a Rhode Island Regiment consisting mostly of *Blacks*; after three to four days this force marched for Fort Oswego by way of Fort Stanwix. From Fort Oswego he returned to Fort Herkimer; during the expedition his feet were frozen en route and he states has yet to recover from the injuries this caused. After remaining about three weeks at Fort Herkimer he transferred to the hospital at Fort Plain and remained there until about June of 1783.

**SETH ROWLEY [the Second]**, W24777. He marched in Willett's Failed Oswego Expedition and states that many men froze to death with only about thirty to forty of the regiment being fit for duty upon their return.

**MICAH SKINNER**, RWPA #S3916. on February 6, 1783, he marched out under Lieutenant Colonel Willett for Fort Oswego. He states that were out on the Oswego Expedition for eleven days, but only had provisions for four days and that *his feet were actually frozen from his heels to his toes so that they became one blister*.

**JN<sup>o</sup> SMITH**. He served as a private in Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett's Regiment and received a one-third invalid's pension for having, . . . *on his return from Oswego to Fort Ranselaer on duty was frozen in his feet to such a degree as to lose sundry parts of his toes which partly deprives him of obtaining a subsistence* . . . in February of 1782 (M1062, page 601).

**ORANGE SPENCER**, RWPA #R9985. In February of 1783, he marched under the command of Captain Joseph Harrison and Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett for Fort Oswego and had his feet frostbitten.

**ALEXANDER THOMPSON**, RWPA #W18128/BLWt #2191-200-Lieut. In February of 1783, he took part in Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett's failed Oswego Expedition. His account of Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Willett's failed Oswego Expedition follows.

*ATTEMPT ON Oswego, 1783. — The following interesting account of the attempt on the enemy's garrison at Oswego, in 1783, was written by Lieut. Alex. Thompson, of New Jersey — an officer of the detachment sent out for that purpose from Fort Rensselaer, on the Mohawk, under the command of Col. Marinus Willetts of New Jersey. Lieut. Thompson was retained in the service after the close of the war, and at the time of his death was captain in the engineer corps. Among other works upon which he was engaged was the construction of the early fortifications on Governor's Island, New York harbor. He was the father of the lamented Col. Alexander Thompson, U.S.A., killed in the Florida war.*

*We are indebted for this letter to Thomas J. Buckley, Esq., of Brooklyn, who married a granddaughter of Capt. Thompson.*

**FORT RENSSELAER ON MOHAWK RIVER**

**JANUARY [sic: February] 24<sup>th</sup> 1783**

**MY DEAR BROTHER** — *The day after I wrote you by Mr. Lee, a wounded officer, I left Albany for my station on this river, which I assure you far exceeds my expectation. The idea I entertained of the country, was here & there at some very considerable distance, to find a little cleared land & a small log house; to be destitute of all society & entirely confined to the walls of the garrison, but to my satisfaction my expectations are exceeded. This fort is situated on a height about half a mile from the river, which affords a beautiful prospect of the country around & shows you at one view as far as the eye will carry, fine fields like those of Bottle Hill [now known as Madison, New Jersey] and likewise of the ruins of buildings and improvements you would little expect, to find in this supposed hidden country, which has been destroyed by the fury of the savages — all the settlements from Caughnawaga twenty miles below this place, until you get to old Fort Stanwix, fifty miles above are destroyed except a few houses which the inhabitants by their great exertions have secured with stockades, and cut loop holes through the walls to prevent their coming near to set fire — Six & seven families are crowded in one of these houses, it would really cause a tender feeling from you to visit & see the sufferings of these unhappy people, among the whole you will find but three or four men to help them through their difficulties — The savages made it an invariable rule to put every man to death they took which they have exercised to a great amount. — The widow and daughter to stop the cries of the Hungry infants have taken up the fatigues of the farm. You will see the poor creatures cutting of wood, thrashing of grain, and performing the other laborious kinds of work. The people of this country are of the High Dutch all together, which affords us but little society among them — they seem so much attached to their own language that few of them will speak to you in any offer. The produce of this country has been very great, and I am induced to believe this country will soon flourish again if the savages remain quiet. On the morning of the 8th inst. just before the sable curtain was drawn, I left this post with a detachment of four hundred troops, in one hundred & twenty sleighs, on an expedition against Oswego a British Garrison about one hundred and eighty miles north west from this place, which we intended to surprise. We passed by Old Fort Stanwix and arrived at the Onieda Lake, the evening of the twelfth, and for fear of being discovered we crossed the same night on the ice, which is about thirty miles over — We left our sleighs at the lake and marched along the Onieda river for Oswego. After we got below Oswego falls we took the ice but were frequently obliged to take the land for fear of being discovered by the enemies Indians that were out on hunting parties — We found but one track during the march, which was of one Indian who had killed a deer a little in front of us, he left the skin on the snow which was warm when we came to the spot — When we got within nine miles of the enemy we*

*halted & made our ladders to execute our business — We carried them with us, & when within three miles of the garrison our guide took a circuit in the woods with an intention he said of advancing on the works the lake side, we were led on over hill and through swamps to a considerable distance from our object, until the day began to break which advanced so fast as to make it impossible to arrive at the works before broad day light — our guide confessed he was Lost — & Here the glorious persuite was given over: the orders we had from the Commander in chief were positive, that if we did not attack before day to return — Colonel Willet was under the necessity of ordering us to the right about. You may be assured we are sensibly mortified at the disappointment to be within three miles of the important object entirely undiscovered, and then to be led a most tedious way by an Indian — On our return we immediately took the ice, because the marching was better.*

*I am fully persuaded the enemy were not apprized of our approach, when we got within two miles of Oswego Falls — On our return, we discovered a party of Indians on the other shore — three of them came immediately to us — supposing we were their own troops going down the country to commit depredations — When they found they were among other troops they appeared a good deal alarmed — we told them we intended to surprise the Garrison, but losing our way — were on our return — that we did not want to hurt them -that they where at liberty — which last expression altered their countenance much — they left us with a seeming satisfaction, and I believe this treatment prevented their harassing our rear, which we momentarily expected — The Garrison consisted of three hundred regular troops & two hundred Indians. The snow was very deep and we found much difficulty breaking the road — We had two days a most severe storm, and the whole of the time exceeding cold weather — we had three men perish before we could return to the lake — and we dare not make fire for fear of being discovered when advancing — we had one hundred and thirty bit with the frost, some very dangerously — I am myself one of the unfortunate number, but by the frequent applications I have made, my feet are much better, and I flatter myself will soon be well — I have not heard from you since by Mr \_\_\_ think of me often — I long to hear from you — I must conclude, with my love to each of the family your affectionate brother*

*ALEXANDER THOMPSON*

Transcribed from a transcript in “THE HISTORICAL MAGAZINE, AND NOTES AND QUERIES CONCERNING THE ANTIQUITIES, HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY OF AMERICA. VOL. III.” NEW YORK: CHARLES B. RICHARDSON. LONDON: TURNER & CO. 1859. By Fort Plank Historian Ken D. Johnson on December 8, 2009. The original manuscript is now located with the collections of the Washington Headquarters State Historical Site in New burgh, New York. Multiple requests have been made to obtain a photocopy of the original manuscript, but have gone unanswered to date. The site’s curator has assured the

accuracy of this transcription, the authenticity of this letter, and its presence within their vault.

**ASHBEL TREAT**, RWPA #S29513. He states he took part in Willett's Oswego Expedition.