

The Sullivan Campaign

A Finding Aid

Livingston County Historian's Office

5 Murray Hill Dr.

Mt. Morris, NY 14510

May 2016

I. Series Summary

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| Title | Sullivan Campaign Collection |
| Extent | 3.1 linear feet |
| Date Range | 1779-2022 |
| Abstract | This collection comprises records and information relating to Sullivan's Campaign of the Revolutionary War in 1779 and its impact on Livingston County, New York, the western limit of the campaign. Included in the collection are books and pamphlets about the history and events of the Sullivan Campaign; photographs, programs, papers, and clippings relating to commemorative events held in Livingston County, which marked the 100 th , 150 th , 175 th , 200 th , and 225 th anniversaries of the campaign in 1879, 1927 and 1929, 1954, 1979, and 2004, respectively. The holdings also contains photographs, clippings, programs, and papers relating to other commemorative and memorial events, educational events, and commemorative sites in Livingston County. Only one known original photograph exists in the series of the 1929 pageant, though there is information and several artifacts relating to the event. |
| Keywords | Ambush at Groveland Boyd, Thomas (Lt.) Brant, Joseph Butler's Rangers Cuylerville, New York Groveland Ambuscade Sullivan's Indian Campaign, 1779 Little Beard's Town Parker, Michael (Sgt.) Sullivan, John (Gen.) |
| Condition | Most items are in good condition, though some are fragile; original items are properly accommodated in sleeves, envelopes, and/or boxes; all newspaper clippings are photocopies, sleeved in reference binders. |
| Languages | English. |
| Access and Restrictions | Use of the documents in the collection is for serious research and by request and permission of the Livingston County Historian's Office. Any use of the material in publications must be cited as follows, "Courtesy of Livingston County Historian's Office, New York". Additionally, all documents should be handled with care. To arrange to conduct research with the documents in the collection, contact the Livingston County Historian by mail at: 5 Murray Hill Drive, Mount Morris, NY, by phone at (585) 243-7955, or by e-mail at Historian@livingstoncountyny.gov . |
| Copyright | Some materials may be subject to copyright. Researchers are required to seek written permission from the copyright holder to reproduce and/or publish materials under copyright. |

II. Background Information

The Sullivan Campaign is a complex event of the American Revolution that has had a lasting impact on the indigenous Haudenosaunee (or Iroquois) people and the trajectory of Western New York.

During the Revolutionary War, most of the Haudenosaunee nations, whose original territory encompassed what is now mostly New York State, sided with the British due to complex histories of trade. In the Genesee Valley, the powerful Seneca Nation was a key ally of the British, providing food and military strength.

In 1779, following continued retaliatory raids and clashes in the northeast between colonists, the British and Loyalists, and indigenous people, Gen. George Washington sent Gen. John Sullivan into the heart of the Seneca Nation's territory with orders to destroy all villages and crops and drive the Seneca west to Fort Niagara. When the army joined Gen. James Clinton's army, the troops numbered 5,000 men. The campaign was one of the largest American offensive movements of the Revolutionary War.

From Tioga and advancing through Newtown, Sullivan's army proceeded into the Finger Lakes region. The main route was through what is now Horseheads, Montour Falls, along the eastern shore of Seneca Lake to Geneva, west to Canandaigua, Honeoye, and into the Genesee Valley.

What is now Livingston County was the western limit of the Sullivan Campaign. Here, as the army set up camp at the head of Conesus Lake, Sullivan sent a scouting party out, most of whom never returned. On September 14, 1779, when Sullivan's army reached the large Seneca settlement of Little Beard's Town or Genesee Castle, at present-day Cuylerville, they discovered the mutilated bodies of the scouting party leader, Lt. Thomas Boyd, and Sgt. Michael Parker.

On September 16, 1779, Gen. Sullivan began the return journey along the same route. The bodies of the rest of the ambushed scouting party were found on a hill overlooking Conesus Lake in what is now Groveland and buried with military honors. The army arrived at Tioga by the end of the month and reached Easton, Pennsylvania, on October 15th, having destroyed forty Seneca towns and vast quantities of food supplies. Most of the Seneca fled to British-held Fort Niagara, where many died of starvation and exposure in the ensuing harsh winter.

At the time, the Sullivan Campaign was regarded by Americans as a successful military move against the Seneca and British, and it had long-lasting impact on the region. Although many Seneca people today regard the event as a genocide, it did not succeed in erasing them and their culture.

II. Contents List

Archival Files

Programs and papers, 1927, 1929, 1956, 1979 (22 items)
 Correspondence, 1879-2004(3 items)
 Sesquicentennial pageant official ribbons and commemorative stamps, 1929 (6 items)
 Bicentennial buttons and ribbons, 1979 (2 items)
 Postal souvenir, 225th anniversary, 2004
 Revolutionary War Living Weekend posters, 2007 (4 items)

Books and Pamphlets

General histories of Sullivan Campaign and soldiers diaries (13 items)
 Account of Boyd and Parker Shrine Dedication, 1927
 Bicentennial Commemorative, 1979
 Impact of the Sullivan-Clinton Campaign on Livingston County, 1779-2004 and drafts (12 items)

Electronic

Sullivan Campaign PowerPoint programs (2 items)
 Groveland Ambuscade rededication images, 1996
 Groveland Ambuscade reenactment images, 2004
 225th Anniversary commemoration images, 2004
 Groveland Ambuscade memorial program images, 2007
 DVD, Groveland Ambuscade reenactment, 2007

Film Negatives

Sullivan Monument, Groveland Ambuscade, Torture Tree, others historical markers (45 items)

Maps

Maps of Sullivan Expedition route, 1779, and Livingston County memorial sites (12 items)

Photographs and Postcards

Boyd and Parker Park and Torture Tree, other events, 1927-2000 (72 items)
 Dedication of Boyd and Parker Shrine, 1927 (28 items)
 Sesquicentennial pageant, 1929 (1 item)
 Addition of Benjamin Wheeler to Groveland Ambuscade Monument, 1996 (18 items)
 225th anniversary commemoration images, 2004 (20 items)
 Historical markers (19 items)
 Boyd and Parker Monument and Torture Tree postcards (2)

Slides

Sullivan Campaign Bicentennial, 1979 (323items)
 Boyd and Parker Shrine, Groveland Ambuscade, monuments, Torture Tree, and other scenes (23 items)
 Dedications and events, 1956-1958 (9 items)

General Reference

2 binders of clippings, correspondence, and copies relating to Sullivan Expedition and commemorative events, 1879-2004

IV. Related Materials

Boyd and Parker Park and Groveland Ambuscade

National and New York State Register of Historic Places

www.nps.gov/

These two sites in Livingston County were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009. The nomination form is a thorough document outlining the significance of the Sullivan Campaign both nationally and within the bounds of Livingston County, New York.

Lockwood R. Doty Papers

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Lockwood R. Doty, judge and writer of an updated version of his father's *History of Livingston County, NY*, was involved in many community events, celebrations, and improvements, including the 1927 dedication of the Boyd and Parker Shrine and the 1929 sesquicentennial anniversary of the Sullivan Campaign. See the Lockwood R. Doty Papers Finding Aid for more details about the collection's scope and holdings.