

Reconnaissance

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE 52ND AIRBORNE INFANTRY (ASLT)

VOL. 2, NO. 5 AUGUST 1956 PRICE 65¢



BIS MARK

THE THREE WARS THAT CREATED THE GERMAN EMPIRE

By

Michael Ohl

After the riots had swept Europe in 1848 (very similar to the ones of today) and subsided, a degree of normalcy returned and the political status-quo was re-established.

Shortly after this time, though, there was a "spontaneous desire" on the part of the northern German people to have one country. If it was spontaneous on the part of the people, it certainly had been the long time ambition of Otto von Bismarck.

Starting at the bottom of the Prussian civil service, Bismarck rose, through the ranks and became president of the Prussian cabinet in 1862.

The first war on the road to empire was the Prussian-Danish War in 1864. A dispute arose as to who actually ruled Schleswig-Holstein. Seeing a chance to get these duchies for Prussia, Bismarck enlisted the aid of Austria-Hungary and declared war on Denmark on February 1, 1864. The war lasted until July 20. Although the Danes put up a stout resistance, they were no match for the two allies.

Although Prussia had to share ruling the duchies with Austria-Hungary, the "northern frontier" was established. The Confederation of the North German States was formed with Prussian influence completely dominant.

Austria-Hungary, though, still held considerable power over Middle European affairs. While this influence lasted, a German Empire could not be created. In 1866, Bismarck's second chance came and war was declared against Austria-Hungary. This lasted seven weeks, June 15 to July 26. Bavaria had sided with Austria-Hungary, but its army was completely routed.

The Austrian army was defeated at the Austrian-Bavarian border. Bismarck realized that he might well need Austria's help in the future and restrained the army from pushing on to Vienna. Austria, however, did have to surrender Venetia to Italy. Bavaria was also treated lightly as Bismarck saw that it, too, would be needed as an ally in the future.

For the time being, the European political situation appeared to be relatively stable. France, however, was becoming increasingly angry over the ever-growing Prussian strength and influence, an anger that was encouraged by the erratic leadership of Napoleon III.

In 1870, the Spanish throne became vacant due to the deposition of Isabella the Second whose very un-victorian conduct could no longer be tolerated. Bismarck at once tried to put a Catholic member of the Hohenzollerns on the Spanish throne.

Upon receiving this news, Napoleon sent his ambassador to the King of Prussia to protest in the strongest terms. Germans on both sides of France would be just too much.

The meeting between King Wilhelm and the ambassador was a pleasant one and Prussia withdrew the proposal. The king advised Bismarck of the meeting by telegram. Not to be thwarted of a chance of war France, however, Bismarck changed the wording of the telegram so that it sounded as though the French ambassador had been insulted. The telegram, known in history as the "Ems Telegram",

was then leaked to the French press. Thus did France and Prussia have the war that both had so long yearned for.

The Franco-Prussian War started in July, 1870, and ended in January, 1871. The French, unable to match the speed of the German armies in mobilizing and taking up favorable positions in the field, sought refuge in fortress cities such as Belfort, Sedan, Verdun, and eventually Paris itself. The German armies surrounded these cities and virtually starved civilians and military into submission.

It is interesting to note that Prussian domination was still not wholly palatable to all Germans. In order to win these dissident groups over to accepting King William of Prussia as Kaiser of Germany, the coronation was held at Versailles-- a situation that may be unique in history and not often mentioned in France.

"The Reconnaissance" is the official publication of the Colorado Military Historians. It is published bi-monthly. Contributions are eagerly solicited and may be sent to editor Charles Williams 12390 West 14th Avenue, Golden. Inquiries, criticism, praise, or anything other reactions you wish to express verbally will be taken by the editor at 238-2987.

Editor: Charles Williams

Typist and reporter: Faye Jones

Art work by: Dan Jones

COMMENT:

We of the staff wish to express our gratitude to Mr. Hal Spangler of C. B. I. Placements for making his mimeograph machine available to us for the purpose of improving this publication. Yes, troops, as you have probably noticed by now, we have switched to a new process this issue. All comments will be appreciated. If a majority prefers this method of printing, we will use it for awhile. Oh, yes. If any of you need help with finding a secretary to replace that jewel who is going away for any length of time, give Hal a call!

HELP WANTED: As I hope to return to college this semester, we will need some help with the paper. With a job, family, and classes, I just will not have the necessary time to type this any longer. PLEASE someone volunteer your wife, girlfriend, sister, or if all else fails, yourself to give Chuck a hand!

Best wishes to John Rames and his charming fiancée on their impending nuptials. May you live a long and happy life together, and have nothing but good fortune!

Also, congratulations to John for becoming a Denver police officer.

SPECIAL CONGRATULATIONS TO AUSTIN MOORE ON WINNING THE PRIMARY ELECTION. MAY YOU BE EQUALLY FORTUNATE IN THE GENERAL ELECTION, AUSTIN.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMERCE DESTRUCTION

by
John Carter

One of the most effective ways for a weak naval power to strike at a strong one is to disrupt its sea-borne commerce. In this article, I shall try to show the development of this type of strategy from its beginnings to its present form.

The first cases of commerce destruction in modern times occurred in the Elizabethan era. At this time, Philip II of Spain was mining gold in Peru and bringing it to Spain. In this manner he was building up the exhausted treasury left to him by Ferdinand and Isabella. This gold build-up was going along with great success until Elizabeth I came to England's throne. She was faced with the same treasury problems that Philip had, but she had no gold mines to replenish her treasury. However, at this time a group of seamen, who were known as the Sea Dogs, came forth with an idea: here was all this Spanish gold moving across the Atlantic in just waiting to be taken. Why not take some? She publicly rebuffed them, but later she called them to her chambers and agreed to finance their raids for a cut of the profits. If they were caught, however, she would not support them in any way. In other, they would be treated as pirates. Her reasons were simple. Philip wanted to stamp out her heretical Protestant nest-hole of an island. He was too pre-occupied with the Turks at the moment to take any direct action, but Elizabeth knew that this wouldn't always be so especially after the decisive Turkish naval defeat at Lepanto. The Sea Dogs raiding was an effective way to strike and do damage without going to war, and at the same time, the "no aid in the event of capture" policy kept her hands clean.

The Sea Dogs, Drake, Hawkins, and Prohibitor, were the first of a breed that was to defend England through thick and thin for nearly four centuries. The ships of England under Henry VIII had been developed to a point where they were the finest in the world. Up until that time, battles at sea were always decided by hand to hand combat with the two ships lashed together. This resulted in ships with huge forecastles and poop decks to give the respective crews the advantage of height. It also made the ships top-heavy and very unweatherly. During Henry VIII's naval expansion program, the gunport was invented, permitting heavy caliber cannon to be mounted on the lower decks. This had been impossible before because, without gunports, the guns had to be mounted on bulwarks. Such heavy guns would have capsized a ship if they had been mounted at that height. With the gunport invention and the development of very powerful long-range guns which could fire 17, 24, and 32 pound shot to a range of a mile or more, Henry's designers took the revolutionary step of designing their ships to be ship killers instead of mankillers only. By Elizabeth's reign, these ships had been developed into low-castled, fleet vessels capable of standing off and pounding the enemy to pieces with their ship smashers. In the event of boarding and hand to hand fighting, these ships had ten to twelve light swivel guns on the bulwarks that fired bags of musketballs and were very effective against a mass of men. Ten to twelve guns, however, was a real reduction when we consider that it wasn't unusual to see a ship twenty years earlier with one hundred to two hundred guns. This was the origin of the modern sailing warship.

Because Spain had the best soldiers in the world at that time, she stuck with the lofty-sided ship that was so unstable and unwieldy. Spain's ships did carry heavy cannon, but they were very short range affairs with a range of only one half mile. To make such a short range armament effective called for a fast ship, and the galleons were definitely not fast. Their ships were an improvement over the old ships, but because of the faults already mentioned, they still needed a great deal of improvement.

With their superior speed, maneuverability, and range of guns, the Sea Dogs were blessed with just the things a raider needs: the ability to strike, decide the issue quickly, and get away fast.

They did strike, and hard. After his first cruise, Drake took the Golden Hind on a round-the-world in which he disrupted gold traffic between Peru and Panama, raided towns, and intercepted the Manila Galleon which annually brought all the treasure mined in the Philippines during the year to Acapulco for shipment to Spain. After this, he sailed up the California coast to the Golden Gate, then across the Pacific and home. The exact value of the treasure he brought in is not known, but we do know that the Golden Hind sat two feet deeper in the water from its weight. Philip demanded Drake's extradition. Elizabeth replied by knighting Drake on his own deck. When the raids continued to increase in number and success, Philip went to war and began the construction of the famed Spanish Armada. Drake took twenty-three ships, sailed into Cadiz harbor, and there burned eighteen ships. Aboard the ships were the seasoned barrel staves which were to have gone into the supply barrels for the Armada. Because of this, green staves were used. The food, powder, and other supplies that went into these barrels was to start turning bad before the Armada ever engaged an English ship. Here we see raiding contributing to the defeat of a more powerful force.

The raids for gold, both before and during the war, enabled Elizabeth to build and equip a navy to meet the Armada, to subsidize an Anglo-Dutch army to fight the Duke of Parma in the Spanish Netherlands, and slow up the construction of the Armada itself.

The operations of Drake and his co-patriots did, definitely, affect the course of the war, but commerce destruction still had a long way to go before it reached the standards realized by the United States and Germany in the second world war.

The next pick up commerce destruction in the Caribbean. Because England and France had to keep their ships in their home waters and because they had fewer ships anyway, there was a great disparity in naval strength between them and Spain's superior numbers. To offset this, they encouraged the operations of buccanniers and the Brethren of the Coast, as a combination group of seafarers, raiders, and filibusters was called. These individuals were not to become pirates until later. At this time, they operated under letters-of-marque which allowed privately owned ships or privateers to operate against the enemy legally. Among the men who sailed these ships were Morgan and Dampier who were to hit Spanish ships and raid the gold ports of Panama, Caracas, and Cartagena. After 1600, when a cruise had been unsuccessful or when England was not at war, these men began to pursue piracy. The attitude of England finally turned against them around 1650 and we begin to see piracy trials, convictions, and hangings in the records. Although it seems ungrateful of England to do this to the men who had kept her flag flying in the Caribbean, these men were flagrantly violating and even forging their letters-of-marque.

BONNIE BRAY

hobby
shop

AIRPLANES

Figini

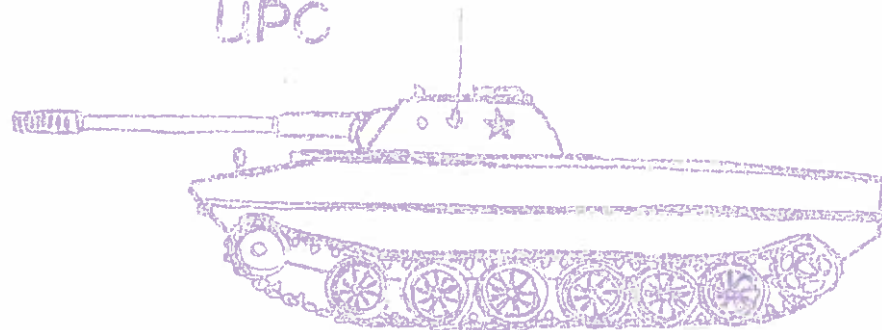
T38A TALON

A1H SKYRADER

AH-1G HUEY COBRA

ARMOR

UPC



CARS

1/16 ITALIA

1/16 BIANCHI

1/12 HONDA

Illegible text at the top of the page.

Illegible text in the middle of the page.

VIA ITALIA
N. 12
10121 TORINO

From here we proceed to the next development, the French Corsairs. The French privateers or "corsairs" as they became known had in the early 1600's set up bases all along the French coast, but their two most famous bases were at Dunkirk and St. Malo. By this time, a system of prizes had come about. During wartime, any captured ship and her cargo were the property of the capturing ships captain and crew. They would put a prize crew aboard and this crew would take the ship to a friendly port where it would be judged by an admiralty court and, if the ship was judged to be an enemy, was "condemned". The ship might then be bought by the navy or by private interests. The money from the sale was divided among the capturing ships captain, crew, and if the ship was a privateer, the owners. If she was a naval vessel, the Admiral in command on that ship's station got some money. Although there were some differences in the procedure and the laws regarding condemnation among the various nations, these were the general ground rules regarding capture and sale of naval or merchant vessels. This was the system under which the corsairs had to operate. Under it, they played havoc with the English and the Dutch merchant marines. These men would ignore seemingly hopeless odds and attack ships that were twice as strong. Their usual tactic was to come alongside the enemy, unleash a broadside, then grapple and board. After that, the hand to hand fight would generally decide the issue. Among these men was Jean Bart of Dunkirk, who began operations in 1674 as a captain of a two gun chasse marsee'. Two years later, he was in command of a twenty-four gun frigate and the best captain in all Dunkirk. Colbert, the minister of finance, had been keeping track of the corsairs and was sharp enough to realize that they were a potential rich source of both prize money and skilled officers and seamen. His plan to induct corsair officers into the navy as officers ran into opposition from the blue-blooded aristocracy. It was only after months of work and pleading and a spectacular victory by Bart that he was able to get Bart a lieutenant's commission. After two years in a subordinate role, he was given a command of his own to chastise the Barbary Pirates. This he did so effectively that the Pirates didn't bother France for four years. Even so, because of court influence, his tenures as ship's captain were intermittent until in 1689 he was given command of the Reilleuse, 24, and the Serpente, 16. He immediately showed that he hadn't lost his touch by taking the Seahorse, 50, with the Reilleuse while the Serpente took nine ships out of the Frigate's convoy. On the way home, an English Frigate intercepted Bart's group. The Reilleuse and Seahorse were too damaged to fight, so Bart shifted his flag to the Serpente and turned to cover the other ships' retreat. In the ensuing desperate battle, he sank the more powerful Englishmen. After this, the Serpente was in sinking condition and it was only by the finest seamanship that Bart got her home. Following his next cruise, he addressed a memorandum to Seignelay, Colbert's son and the Minister of Marine. C. B. Norman in his book, The French Corsairs, says, "He suggested that Government should arm a certain number of light frigates, the smartest sailors to be found, man them with picked men, unite them in groups under the command of a sailor thoroughly conversant with the seas in which they were destined to cruise, and hurl these groups on the merchant-vessels which frequent the Channel, the Northern Ocean, and the Mediterranean." Due to lack of finances and court prejudice against its source, the memorandum was not carried out in full. Later, however, it was carried out in part. After a few weeks, both the Reilleuse and the Jeux, 16, (which had replaced the Serpente) were captured after a fierce battle but, in an escape worthy of Hollywood, Bart and the captain of the Jeux, the Chevalier de Forbin, made their way to France in a small boat.

Again he went to work to get the raiding squadron idea into action. He succeeded to some extent. He was first given a three ship squadron, and with his continuing success, he was given progressively bigger squadrons until he was operating one with seven ships. A year after this, he was fitting out an even bigger one when he caught pleurisy and died within five days, helped to a speedy death, no doubt, by the medical procedures of the time. While he had these squadrons, he had raised havoc with the English and Dutch. He broke up and captured their convoys, often including most of the escort, disrupted their fishing industry, and recaptured the annual wheat convoy which the Dutch had taken earlier. Even England wasn't safe for he staged a number of amphibious raids both there and in Scotland. After his death, his idea was carried on by Forbin, Duguay-Brouin, Cassard and Thurot. These men, by their actions, caused great numbers of enemy ships to be detached from the battle squadrons to guard convoys and conduct searches for the raiders. In this, we begin to see the first vestiges of modern commerce warfare both in the groups of raiders (comparable to the American and the German submarine wolfpacks of World War II) and the use of light raiders to weaken an enemy battle line. The raids on shores which were also carried out by later corsairs had the by-product of drawing enemy troops from the land armies, something we see again in the Napoleonic wars and in World Wars I and II.

The war of 1812 was to change commerce destruction into its present form. Since this is a classic in commerce warfare, it would be well for us to consider the conditions under which it was fought. First, we had no allies to stand off Britain's fleet. At this time she had one hundred and forty-four battleships, at least one hundred and eighty frigates, and several hundred smaller cruisers. Because of Jefferson's attempt to buy defense cheaply with his coastal gunboat policy, we had no battleships. If the naval officers had had their way, we would have had twelve of them. We did, however, have seven frigates and eight smaller vessels plus thirteen Revenue Marine cutters.

Although we were small in numbers, we had some of the best frigates in the world. America had been blessed by the fact that ship designers were among the best. Realizing that we would have to make up in gunpower what we lacked in numbers, they gave our first three frigates more and heavier guns than the standard Royal Navy frigate along with great speed. They also gave us three frigates that were equal in gunpower to Royal Navy frigates and one that was somewhat weaker but designed primarily for commerce destruction. These two classes were considerably faster than their opponents. The ship sloops which carried twenty guns were also good. In fact, they bore much the same relationship to their opposite numbers in the Royal Navy that our heavy frigate bore to theirs. The British, who looked upon us as an inferior sea power, thought that our three heavy frigates were too heavy. In fact, Captain Carden, RN and Steven Decatur, USN, were dining together when Carden said of those ships, "The twenty-four pounder is too heavy to be handled as rapidly and efficiently as the British eighteen. Besides, Decatur, though your ships may be good enough, and you are a clever set of fellows, what practice have you had in war? There's the rub." (The twenty-four pounder was the main battery weapon of the frigates.) What practice had our officers had? Well, first there was the French "War" in which we had done fairly well. Then there was the Tripolitan War. Here, as lieutenants and midshipmen, the captains of 1812 got their baptism of fire. Commodore Preble, their commander, taught them the importance of gunnery discipline and morale in a crew. It is notable that all of these men were popular with their crews. They came to be known as Preble's Boys and were to win every one of the American naval victories except Lake Erie which was won by Perry.

Besides good officers and strong ships, we had other advantages. First of all, the seamen were out to win their freedom from Britain's impressment policies. Secondly, the Americans had an excellent new class of privateer called the Baltimore Clipper. Although these were not numerous until late 1813, they began to have an ever-increasing effect on the war. They were large top-sailed schooners that were armed to the teeth and were fast as the wind. They were not just out for prize money now. They were out for blood. On the British side, there was the war weariness of twenty-one years of war and the continuing need to blockade the French and the French fleet.

In the first months of the war we managed to take six warships at a loss of two of our own ships. Three of these battles were won by the heavy frigates with their inefficient twenty-four pounder. Of these, two were so devastated that they sank and the third was only gotten into port by the most heroic measures on the part of the Americans. Our two ship sloops had each made a capture: the Hornet sinking the Peacock and the Wasp taking the Frolic. Wasp and Frolic were both taken by a battleship the next day as neither had repaired its damage from battle sufficiently to fight or run away. The remaining captures, one American and one British, were made by overwhelming power and chance rather than skill. Until this time, the battle procedure had been to fight until one-fifth to one-quarter of the crew was killed or injured and then surrender. The Americans worked too fast for that, however, and when they took a ship, she was a wreck and usually sank. Because of this and our inferiority in numbers, these battles were bad shocks to the British.

In Britain the people went wild. The London Times had said it wouldn't take long to bring in the "handful of fir-built frigates under a bit of striped bunting and manned by bastards and outlaws." They had tried to explain away the first defeats, but the most recent had been a clear cut, evenly matched battle. Now they moaned, "Good God! Can such things be?" Their shipping paper, The Pilot, said, "The public will learn, with sentiments which we shall not presume to anticipate, that a third British frigate has struck her flag to an American. This is an occurrence that calls for serious reflection--this and the fact that Lloyd's list contains notices of upwards of 500 British vessels captured in seven months by the Americans. Five hundred merchantmen and three frigates! Anyone who had predicted such a result of an American war this time last year would have been treated as a madman or a traitor."

As this article says, our privateers had scored over five hundred ships in seven months-- better than the yearly haul of the French corsairs during any of the Anglo-French wars. The British were just becoming aware of the fact that the USS Essex, 32, had slipped into the Pacific and was wiping out their whaling industry.

Now came the rebound. They began an increasingly strong blockade that started to cut our privateer operations. In the next fifteen months, they managed to capture one of our lighter frigates in an even battle. Then they caught one of our new sloops, the brig, Argus. Finally, they caught the Essex, but only after she had finished off the British whaling industry. The British had eighteen new sloops on the ways designed to stop our ship sloops. They also had an assault force ready to attack Washington and Baltimore, the home of the American privateers. Two more attacks were projected - one to come down Lake Champlain, and one against New Orleans to cut off our Mississippi River trade. All in all, things looked pretty black for the Americans.

As I said, they captured the Arcus, 16. There was only one thing unusual about this: she was captured in the Royal Navy's sacred ground, the English Channel. Not only that, she had captured and burned twenty ships, plus capturing another. No one had ever done that before. Now the privateers with their Baltimore clippers saw where the action was and moved in. One, the Chasseur, even sent a notice to Llog's saying she had placed Britain under blockade. To Britain, this wasn't funny because now it was almost true. A British merchant commented that it wasn't even safe to sail from Bristol to Portsmouth without a convoy.

William Doughty, a brilliant new designer, had just completed a new group of ship sloops. They were among the fastest warships in the world and carried in their twenty-two gun batteries the power to smash the English sloops. One of these, the Peacock, broke out of the New York blockade with an earlier sister, the Hornet. Heading south, they separated near the Cape of Good Hope. In separate battles, the Peacock captured Evervieu, 18, intact and the Hornet sank the Penguin, also of eighteen guns. The Penguin was one of the sloops that was supposed to stop our sloops. Then they hit the India trade in the prize fashion.

Now came the worst shock of all. The "Doughty sloop", Wasp, 22, under Johnston Blakely, tore through the blockade in a gale. Blakely wanted action and remembering the Arcus' cruise, he headed for the Channel. There he took and burned five ships, one of them right out of a convoy. On the night of June 28, 1814, he fought the Reindeer, 18, and sank her. His men had worked so fast that they had knocked a continuous gash into the Reindeer on the level of her gun deck. After a brief refit at L'Orient, he was back in the Channel where he burned three more ships. Then he sank the Avon, 18, in a night fight before the rest of the British squadron, of which the Avon was a part, could be of any help to pick up the survivors. After this, he burned a merchantman and captured another that was so valuable that he decided to make a prize of it. After this, he was never heard of again. He simply disappeared and neither he nor the Wasp was ever seen or heard of again.

Because of these raids, the that the privateers were even attacking warships now, and the imminent completion of two raiding squadrons and three battleships that promised to be as good as our sloops and frigates, the British began to consider making peace. They made a definite decision when, in a knock-down, drag-out battle, the British offensive was stopped on Lake Champlain. At Baltimore they were beaten again.

Although I have left much untold of this war, I hope that the correct impression had been suggested by what I have told. This war was won almost exclusively by commerce destruction and by Britain's total inability to stop our raiders and privateers.

By setting up and burn-and-destroy policy, we revolutionized this form of warfare. It has been carried on by different weapons as they have been developed, the torpedo in modern times, for instance, but the principle of destroying commerce had been proven effective. An enemy without supplies cannot continue to fight.

1. The number after a ship's name indicates the number of guns she carries. Battleships carried 60 or more. Brigades or cruisers carried 34 to 54 and sloops had 14 to 24.

2. The Coast Guard was called the Revenue Marine at this time. Then, as now, its ships went to the Navy in time of war.

WARRIORS OF THE WOODLANDS

A Military History of the Iroquois Indians Part II-- Red vs. White

by
Charles Williams

The scouting party moved through the cool September night along Conesus Lake. Some time ago, in the early morning, they had shot two Senecas but since then had seen no enemy. They drifted aimlessly looking for the trail to Little Beard's town. As the sky turned gray and dawn seeped into the underbrush, a cry rang out from the advance scout--"Indian!" To the east of the party, several enemy warriors slipped from tree to tree, just outside musket range. The scouting party started in pursuit. Manyerry, a friendly Oneida traveling with the party ran up alongside the commander, Lt. Thomas Boyd, and tried to warn him. "Ambush!" But the impetuous Boyd was having none of it. Danger? With two dozen regulars against 3 or 4 Indians? Besides, they were heading east, right into the waiting army of General Sullivan. So on they went, playing a deadly game of hide and seek through the lush countryside of the Genesee Valley.

Out of nowhere, over 600 Iroquois and Tories descended on the party. Less than two miles from Sullivan's army, time ran out for sixteen of the scouting party. Dust rose like fog, lifting to reveal vicious hand to hand fighting. A few of the Continentals slipped away and dashed into Sullivan's camp. Light troops moved forward, but they were too late. The enemy had moved off, leaving their dead but taking Lt. Boyd and Sgt. Parker with them. Sullivan's troops found them the next day.

On Rt. Alt. 20, just outside the hamlet of Cuylerville on the way to Genesee, there is a small park set in a bend of the Genesee River. It is a lush, green quiet place on a summer day. The river, behind a screen of trees, drifts slowly along. In the middle of the park, and dominating it, is a huge old oak tree. It is one of the most beautiful spots in the Genesee Valley, and a favorite picnic area. Completely different from the scene that greeted Sullivan's troops that September day in 1779. In that idyllic setting were the remains of Boyd and Parker. Parker had been whipped and beheaded. Next to the tree was what was left of Boyd. After miscellaneous mutilations, such as eyes gouged out, fingernails and toenails ripped out, and genitals slashed, a small hole was cut in Boyd's side and one end of his intestine nailed to the tree. He was forced to move around the tree until the full length of his intestines were wrapped around the tree. Finally, because the incredibly tough Boyd didn't look as though he was going to die before Sullivan's army arrived, he was beheaded. In the words of Henry Clune, "The romantic legends of the noble red men are pretty for children; the men of the Sullivan-Clinton Campaign may never have heard of them."

The battle was notable for one other aspect. It was the last victory for the Iroquois nation. While they would fight again, it was to be as a support force for white soldiers and not as a nation. The domination of the history of the northwestern frontier by these fierce and wise warriors had come to an end.

Actually, it had come to an end almost twenty years earlier, at the end of the French and Indian War when the French were driven from North America. The seeds of this destruction had been sown even as the Iroquois rose to power, for

much of their power had come from their geographical position.

Look at a map of the Eastern United States. The Allegheny Mountains stretch north and south, shutting off the coastal areas from the interior, rich in land and, more important to our history, beaver. There are two natural gaps in this chain-- the Cumberland Gap and the Mohawk River. North, the St. Lawrence runs from the Great Lakes into the Atlantic. This is the life stream of French North America. The Cumberland is a land route, and to traverse it you have to cut a road through heavy timber. The easy way, by water, is the Mohawk. Moreover, from the Mohawk you can get, largely by water, to the Ohio and thence to the Mississippi. Straddling the strategic heartland of Early American history were the Iroquois Indians.

In the first part, we considered briefly how the French and Dutch and British rivalry for the fur trade had affected the Iroquois. The French, after their initial mistake of alienating the Iroquois, tried for a time to befriend them and send missionaries among them. The missionaries had some success with the Mohawk, but very little with the rest of the Five Nations. However, Iroquois encroachments on the fur traffic grew to be too much for the French to bear, and in 1687 Jacques de Denonville assembled what was to that time the greatest military force ever seen on the American continent---1500 Frenchmen and a like number of Indians. Denonville left Quebec in early spring and sailed down the St. Lawrence to Lake Ontario, and from there westward to Irondequoit Bay. On July 12, he set out toward the largest of the Seneca towns, near the present town of Victor. The weather was hot and muggy, and on the second day of the march, Denonville stripped down to underwear and boots. As the French force neared the Seneca village, it moved into an ambush manned by 800 Seneca braves. The initial onslaught by the Indians pushed the French back in a hard fought hand-to-hand struggle. For a few moments it seemed as if the French would break, but Denonville rallied them and drove the Seneca back. They broke and fled, leaving the field to the French. The French burned three towns and pulled back to their fortifications on Irondequoit Bay. They re-embarked and left one day before a large force of Iroquois descended upon the camp. The net result of this raid was to thoroughly anger the Iroquois.

They got their revenge in 1689. A force of 1400 Iroquois and a few English and Dutch settlers invaded Montreal Island. They wiped out the town of La Chine, killing between 150 and 200 people. They burned and plundered and frightened the French profoundly.

France reorganized her colonial government and appointed Frontenac governor. Faced with the task of rebuilding New France, Frontenac made a fateful decision. He encouraged small bands of coureurs de bois and Indians loose on the English settlers to the south. He also initiated the practice of paying for scalps. The eventual result of Frontenac's policy was King Williams War.

The Iroquois retaliated with raids on their own. They also demanded that the English do something and not let them carry the fight alone. Accordingly, in June of 1691, a mixed party under the command of Peter Schuyler set out the traditional route up Lake Champlain with the French settlement of La Prairie as their objective. The French learned of the force and reinforced the fort at La Prairie and also set up an ambush along the return route.

Schuyler attacked after a storm and caught the French by surprise. However, he soon realized he was outnumbered and withdrew-- right into the French ambush. He fought through the ambush and retreated to Albany. The main effect of the raid was to reassure the Iroquois and jolt the French.

Frontenac continued the pressure. In 1693, he set a party of 600 Canadians and Indians on a January march into Mohawk territory. They destroyed 3 Mohawk towns and captured 300 people. They wandered back toward Canada. A posse of English settlers and Iroquois under the command of Schuyler set out in pursuit and caught up the Canadians. After an inconclusive fire fight, the Canadians broke off. They threatened to kill the captives if attacked again, so Schuyler was forced to call his force off.

9 The story goes that because they ran out of provisions, the Iroquois boiled some of the killed Canadians. "Schuyler was as hungry as anyone and gratefully accepted some soup offered him, but when he found a hand floating in his bowl, he lost all appetite."

In 1696 Frontenac tried again. He raised an army of 2200 men and moved into Onandago country, near the present city of Syracuse. The raid was a failure.

Frontenac was very old man when this expedition was mounted-- some 76 years old. He led the expedition personally. Two years later he died. The new French leadership tried a different approach. They tried to keep the Iroquois neutral. They had quite a bit of luck at this. This success was in no small part due to the wish of the Iroquois to play the French against the English for their own benefit. The Iroquois had long realized that it was not to their advantage to have France driven from the land. Consequently, the Iroquois official policy for the next fifty years was to be neutral. They even went so far as to allow the French to build a fort at Niagara.

At this point, 1700, the Iroquois were at their zenith of power and control. They had destroyed all Indian opposition and held the balance of power between two great European nations. Both England and France were forced to treat them as equals at the conference table. This was due to not only their strategic position, but the Iroquois' natural skill at diplomacy. The one thing the Iroquois could do better than fight was to talk. However, even as they were moving into this position of dominance, the seeds of destruction were being sown. There were three factors which were to ultimately lead to Iroquois downfall:

- 1) The contempt that the Iroquois felt for other Indians and for the fighting qualities of the white man;
- 2) The degeneration of Indian life and values by prolonged contact with the white men; and
- 3) The influx of English settlers, which upset the British-French balance of power, drove the French from America, and inevitably encroached into Iroquois territory.

The contempt that the Iroquois felt for other Indians was explainable--- after all, they had defeated most of them in battle. They were arrogant and overbearing in their dealings with other red men, and this attitude was to come back to haunt them 75 years later, during the Revolution and the destruction of their homeland. Their contempt for the fighting qualities of the white man was also honestly come by---the French didn't have a particularly sparkling record in Iroquois fighting, and the militia had not done much better. British regulars seemed to be better to the Iroquois, and this in part influenced their decision to join the British in the French and Indian War. Still, they felt right up to the Revolution that they were superior to any white fighting force.

Contact with the white race brought one great corrupting influence---hard liquor. The story of booze and the redskin is too well-known to repeat here. The Iroquois were not impervious to it, although they did manage to control it better than the western tribes did. There were a couple of other factors also.

The years of neutrality brought stresses to the League. The French and English managed to divide the tribes. Religion also played a part in dividing the five nations. The French were fairly successful in converting many of the Mohawk, and a large colony moved to Canada. This sapped much of the vitality of the religious fervor that marked the Iroquois expansion. The Iroquois, and Indians in general, also grew more dependent on the white man's goods and way of life.

As the number of British colonists increased, pressure for expansion grew. The land over the mountains in the Ohio valley had been de-populated by the Iroquois wars of expansion, and they had not allowed re-settlement. This proved to be a mistake. When the Iroquois opened up these lands for settlement with the Treaty of Ft. Stanwix in 1768, they were jolted by the land rush that developed. Not only did it pressure their homeland, but it lessened their strategic position. The English also tended to settle while the French were traders. Inevitably, the French were forced out. With the French gone, the Iroquois lost one of their levers.

Save for raiding, the years until the French and Indian War quiet. In 1738, however, a character came upon the stage who was to play a dominant role in Iroquois, and North American, history in the French-British struggle. When he came into the Mohawk Valley, William Johnson was 23 years old and stone broke. By the time of his death 39 years later, he was knighted, fantastically rich, and probably the most powerful man on the North American continent. Johnson was one of those very rare individuals who had unbroken good luck and who never lost a battle.

In July of 1755, Johnson, commanding a force of 3500 militia and a few Mohawks, moved up the Hudson toward Crown Point, after dropping off 500 men to build a fort, Fort Edward. The French under Baron von Dieskau moved down from Crown Point to attack the Fort. Johnson, on hearing this, sent a force of 1000 militia and Indians to reinforce the Fort and cut off Dieskau. It was about this force that Chief Hendrick, the Mohawk chief, said, "If they are to fight, they are too few; if they are to sacrifice, they are too many." True to this, Dieskau and his regulars ambushed the force and scattered it. The Mohawks fought on both sides with no distinction. Dieskau moved on and into Johnson's prepared defensive position at the tip of Lake George on 8 September 1755. Johnson's militia won and Dieskau was captured. This battle had two effects for Johnson. It won him a baronetcy (one of three awarded to colonists during the entire history of British North America) and eventually enabled him to convince the Iroquois to cast aside their neutrality and fight the French.

It was 1759 before the Iroquois made their weight felt, and even then the part they played is disputed. Sir William Johnson laid siege to and took Ft. Niagara. During the Siege, a French relief force of 600 whites and 1000 western Indians arrived. Faced with fighting the Iroquois, the western Indians refused to fight. The French attacked the rear of Johnson's lines and in the battle that followed were defeated. Sometime during the battle the Iroquois joined in and turned the French retreat into a rout.

When Pontiac led his war against the white man in the early 1760's, the Iroquois again split. The Seneca were very much in favor of joining Pontiac, and some of them actually did. The rest of the tribes elected not to join, and this earned them enmity from some of the western tribes whose help they could have used during the Revolution. Johnson's appeals for neutrality were given decisive influence by the help of a young Mohawk who was to play a decisive role in the Revolution, Joseph Brant.



HOBBY SHOP

2426 So. FEDERAL 934-0022

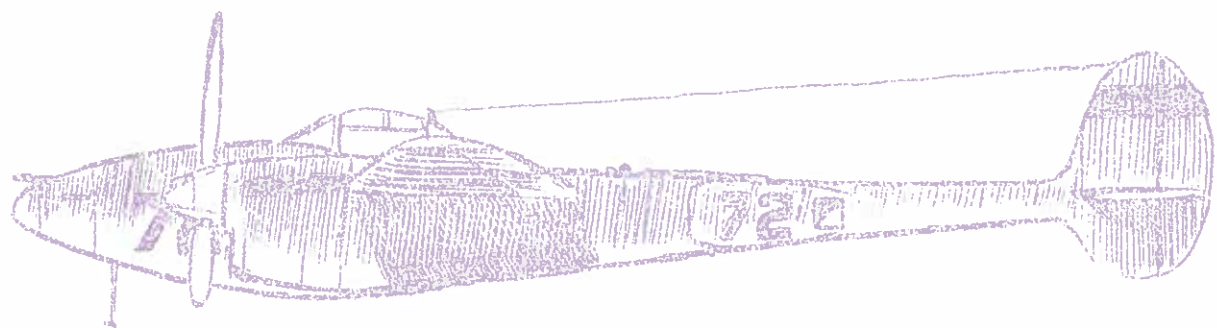
SPECIALIZING

in

PLASTIC MODEL AIRPLANE

KITS - DECALS - PAINT

NEW MICRO DECALS - INCLUDING
"MICRO-SET"



COMPLETE LINE - RR AND MINATURE
EXCLUSIVE OF FLOGUIL "COLOR STANDARDS"
& "FORMULAS" in a kit along with "Painting Plastic Miniatures"

MONOGRAM B-52 - \$10⁹⁵

While They Last



When Sir William Johnson died on July 11, 1774, leadership of the Iroquois passed on to this amazing man. Born of Mohawk parents in Ohio in Mingo country, (Mingos were Iroquois who had permanently moved into the Ohio Valley), he was raised in the traditional Indian Way. During the French and Indian War his parents moved back to New York, when Brant was 12. His sister Molly caught Johnson's eye and became his mistress and head of the house. Because of this association, Brant moved into the white world and adapted to it, probably better than any other single Indian.

The Revolution brought confusion to the Iroquois. They didn't completely understand the conflict of Englishman vs. Englishman. While Johnson and Brant were able to convince most of the Iroquois to join the British, the tribes were badly split. Missionaries, who were mostly Patriots or Pacifists, were able to keep many individuals out or loyal to the colonies. One, Samuel Kirkland, kept the whole Oneida tribe on the colonial side. Finally, in the fall of 1776, unable to resolve their differences, the council fire was put out and in a symbolic as well as a very real way, the union of the Six Nations came to an end---and with it, the source of much of their strength.

Still, in 1777, only the Mohawks and Cayuga were fully committed. The Seneca, fiercest of the Iroquois fighters, were holding on to neutrality. Brant invited them to watch the British take Ft. Stanwix and crush Herkimer's relief force. When the British ambushed the colonials on Oriskany Creek, the Seneca jumped in when the battle seemed won. When the thunderstorm which saved the Americans broke out, the Seneca were deeply involved. The fighting was close hand-to-hand style. After the storm, the Americans, in small groups of 2 and 3 fought back on even terms. The hand-to-hand fighting between Tory and Colonial was even more bitter than fighting between red and white, and the Iroquois began to back out. It was more fun to watch the whites, and besides they were losing entirely too many warriors. In the end, while this did ensure Seneca participation on the British side, it had more beneficial effects for the colonials than the British. A relief force from Ft. Stanwix looted the British base camp while the battle was going on and stole most of the gifts given to the Iroquois. The Iroquois came out of the battle with more respect for colonial militia and some misgivings about the outcome of the war.

Brant decided to strike with small bands of raiders rather than by invasion. It was this decision, and the excesses of Walter Butler which led to the Sullivan Expedition. The summer of 1778 saw much of the frontier in flames. There remained one more act which would influence the American people and which assured the Sullivan Expedition--- the Cherry Valley Massacre. On November 9, 1778, 200 Tory rangers, 50 regulars of the 8th or Kings Regiment and 400 Indians fell upon Cherry Valley and massacred its inhabitants. In an orgy of killing, looting, and burning, the Indians got completely out of control and were even joined by some of the Rangers. Walter Butler was in command, although Brant was also present.

On 27 February, 1779, Congress authorized Washington to form a force of 16 regiments of infantry, and augmented regiment of artillery (the 4th with two 6-pounders, two 5 1/2 in. howitzers, and four 3 pounders), a troop of cavalry, and a battalion of Morgan's Rifles gathered under command of Major General John Sullivan. The expedition of 5000 men cost \$1 million, and was one of the largest and most expensive of the war.

Sullivan split his command. A command under Clinton was to come down the Mohawk River to Ft. Stanwix and to join Sullivan at Tioga near the New York-Pennsylvania line. Brodhead was to march north from Pittsburg along the Allegheny and strike at the Mingo and Seneca towns.

Sullivan set out on 18 June, 1779 and slowly advanced. He laid waste to the Iroquois towns, crops and orchards. On 22 August, Clinton joined him at Tioga. He ground onward, Butler and Brant tried to stop him with an ambush. They picked a ridge above the bend of the Chemung River at Newtown, near the present Elmira. They dug in and waited until 29 August.

Sullivan's scouts warned him of the trap, and he held up his advance until the position was thoroughly scouted. While deploying his troops, he opened up with an artillery barrage. Most of the 400 Indians broke and ran. Brant was able to briefly rally some braves and attacked Sullivan's right. Poor's brigade drove back the attack and Brant urged Butler to retreat. Butler withdrew his 350 Rangers, and the Battle of Newtown, and the Iroquois domination of New York history was over. There remained only the Boyd and Parker affair, the last victory of the Iroquois. Thereafter, they would be British auxiliaries.

Sullivan, at a cost of 41 dead, (six of whom were non-combat), had finished the Iroquois. He withdrew after destroying Little Beards Town. The winter of 1779-1780 was one of the longest and hardest on record, and the Iroquois suffered greatly at Niagara. However, Sullivan's failure to take Niagara cost the frontier greatly the next summer. Raids continued, and the Iroquois supported a thrust by Major Guy Carlton down the old Champlain invasion trail. This thrust was to coincide with Benedict Arnold's turn-over of West Point to the British. When that plan fell through, so did the northern thrust. In 1781, the raids completely devastated the New York frontier. Even Ft. Stanwix was abandoned.

When the British pulled out of the Northeast in 1782, only Brant carried on the struggle. The main body of Iroquois signed a peace treaty with the American Government, a treaty signed by George Washington. Brant went into exile in Canada.

Iroquois served very well during the War of 1812 with the Americans against the British. Even Brant came out of exile and earned grudging forgiveness for his role during the Revolution. They have served with distinction during the rest of the American wars. For instance, Ely Parker, a Seneca, was a valuable member of Grant's staff.

In summary there were four factors which lead to Iroquois success: 1) the ability to throw relatively large, compact groups of warriors into with a unified purpose; 2) their great strategic position; 3) they were the first Indians to get large numbers of guns; 4) they were highly motivated with religious fervor. A great people, they represented the finest that the North American Indian was capable of being. They also had enough of the weaknesses to finally fall.

"Ye say they all have passed away,
That noble rade and brave,
That their light canoes have vanished
From off the crested wave;
That 'mid the forest where they roamed
There rings no hunter's shout;
But their name is on your waters,
Ye may not wash it out."

---Lydia Huntley Sigourney

(References on next page)

MEMBER PROFILE

You have often seen this members contributions to the club right here in the newsletter. He generally does all the illustrations for articles and advertisements, as well as doing the cover each issue. Many of you have also met him on the game board, and know him to be fiercely competitive and a good tactician. At 25, Dan Jones got interested in the field of military history by reading about aviation of all periods. Seeing many photographs of aircraft he found attractive, he decided to satisfy his curiosity about what a model of that aircraft would look like, he proceeded to build one. He has been doing that ever since, and is now somewhat of an authority on aircraft of all periods, although one of his speciality fields is the period between the wars. Dan attended East Denver High School, and hopes to eventually go on to college, probably studying some field of art and some business management. He has done a number of fine paintings, and is never without pen and paper on which to sketch or doodle. Until becoming acquainted with the CMH, Dan's interests were primarily in the aviation area, but he has now become an avid wargamer, devising games as well as playing them. He has begun to collect ships and figures, and has also increased considerably a small collection of armored vehicles. At the moment, he is employed as a truck driver for Nobel Inc., but in the future, he would like to open a hobby shop. He is also interested in manufacturing a line of models of his own making.

References for the Iroquois article:

- 1) Indians of the Woodlands, George Hyde, University of Oklahoma Press 1962
- 2) The Genesee Henry Clune Holy, Rinehart and Winston 1963
- 3) Forth to the Wilderness Dale van Every William Morrow Co. 1961
- 4) A Company of Heroes Dale van Every "" "" 1962
- 5) Ark of Empire "" "" "" 1963
- 6) Land of the Seneca Arch Merrill American Book-Stradford Press 1949
- 7) The French and Indian Wars Edward Hamilton Doubleday and Co. 1962

PATRONIZE YOUR ADVERTISERS!

The annual Christmas Party will be held on December 21, 1968. It will be a costume party this year, so be thinking about what you will be. Costume for the ladies is optional.

The new system of having a set theme for displays at the meetings is GREAT!! Don't know why we didn't try it sooner.

Executive Council will now meet on the Third Monday of the month. Any interested members are invited to come.

The Colorado Military Historians
meet The First Monday
of each month
at

The Fort
Morrison, Colorado

Diner - 6:30
Meeting - 8:30