

Letter from Philip John Schuyler to Goose Van Schaick, April 7, 1779

Albany April 7:th 1779

Sir

His Excellency the Commander In Chief having approved that an Enterprize Should be prosecuted against the Ononondaga Indians you are to take the Command of the troops destined for this Service they will be Comprised of detachments from the following Corps

Van Schacchs

Gen woods

&c

amounting in all to 500 men Exclusive of officers

Such of these troops as are not already at Fort Schuyler have orders to rendezvous at that place without delay, you will therefore repair to that Fortress with all possible dispatch, and as I have ordered thirty batteaux to be sent up there without delay, as soon as these arrive and when all the troops abovementioned have joined you, you will cause the batteaux to be conveyed In the most expeditious manner Into wood Creek, together with fourteen days provision and proceed without loss of Time

From all the accounts I have been able to Collect the distance from the west End of the Oneida Lake to the principal Onondaga settlement is under twenty five miles and from the Junction of the rivers commonly called the three rivers not more than fifteen miles, It is therefore my Intention that you should proceed with all possible dispatch to the lattor place, and debark your troops on the South side of the Onondaga river on the point of land formed the Junction of that and the Cayuga or three rivers, and proceed thence by land to Onondaga unless on Consulting with L^t Colo: Van Dyke and M^r Deane agent to the Commissioners for Indian affairs or from other Information It should be deemed more advisable to proceed from the west End from Onida lake to Onondaga If you proceed from

the three Rivers you will have a detachment besides the Batteauxmen to reconduct the Batteaux up the Onondago river to the west end of the Onida Lake there to wait Your return, this detachment you will order to throw up some Cover to prevent a surprize In Your Absence for which purpose you will provide Yourself with a Competent Number of axes & Intrenching tools.—

Five days provision will in all probability be Sufficient to bring with the detachment from the place of Debarkation, this should be dressed and I wish you to begin your land march in the Evening for the Greater Chance of surprizing the Enemy before day next Morning—

Mr. Deane will have directions to assist you In procuring Guides I am Informed that from the west End of Oneida Lake there is a path which leads to Onondaga, thro a tolerably open country, That from the three rivers the route is along the South side of the Cayuga river about a mile and a half to a small creek falling into that river then along the Creek about two miles, Then keeping on the South Side of the Salt [Onondaga] Lake to the End thereof 4 miles where it is Supposed there are two or three Onondaga families, you will if possible secure thence to the Capital Village between seven or eight miles In all this sent according to my Information there is a beaten and broad foot path with good marching In the woods

It is my Intention that as many prisoners should be made as possible You will therefore put none to death whom you can make prisoners of and you will give pointed orders for this purpose.— You will burn all the buildings and destroy all such Cattle & Effects as you cannot with out retarding your return bring off with you.—

Having executed the Object of the Enterprize you will hasten back to Fort Schuyler and order the Several detachments to return to the posts from whence they marched to Join You unless you meet with orders from me for a different disposition of them— Sending such prisoners as you may make under a Sufficient Escort to this place and transmitting me an account of your proceedings

To Cover the real object of the Enterprize is matter of the first moment you will therefore when the troops join you and when You begin to move the Batteaux and Start to Wood

Creek give out that you are ordered to take post at Oswego and attempt the reduction of Derr Island and to give more Countenance to this It would be well to Embark two light pieces of Artillery which may be left with the Batteaux

L^t Colo: Willet & Major Cochram will be the field Officers to Accompany you with these Gentlemen you will Consult on the Subject matter of the business commanded to You change Whenever there is occasion.

Barbarous as the Savages are they never violate the Chastity of any women taken prisoners, altho I have very little apprehension that any of Soldiers will so far forget their Character as to attempt such a crime on the Indian women which may fall into their hands, Yet it will be well to take Measures to prevent such a stain to our Army.

I do not wish that any of the Indians In Alliance with us should Accompany you in this Expedition if any should however Join you on a Supposition that You are going to Oswego you will permit them to accompany you if you cannot prove on them to tarry taking the most Particular care when you Debark that they do not leave you for which purpose It will be proper to appoint alert officers and a Chosen number of men always to watch over such Indians without their knowing It to prevent their leaving you.

L^t. Colo. V. Dyke will Command In the Fort In Your Absence, you will Enjoin him to Guard against a Surprise and not to leave the least Chance for the Enemy to Succeed In case they should attempt one

You will take Care to Supply the troops Intended for the Expedition with what Ammunition may be necessary

Altho the above mentioned detachments are ordered for this Service Yet such as may Sicken or be rendered unfit for this Service you will leave at the fort & replace them with others from the Garrison

I need not to An officer of Your Judgement & Experience dwell on on the necessity of
Guarding against a Surprise, of Secrecy or dispatch In a business in which each is of so
much Importance

Wishing you Success and an Acquisition of much reputation I am

Document Source: The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History