

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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John Proctor — The Paul Revere of the Ridge Road

From the pages of "Pioneer History of Orleans County New York" by Arad Thomas, published in 1871, we find this interesting autobiographical account by John Proctor. He states as follows:

I was born in the town of Dunstable, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, Jan. 22, 1787. In March, 1810, I arrived in Batavia, since changed to Gaines, on the Holland Purchase, and purchased a lot of land near the Transit Line. I chopped over five acres of land and built a log cabin in what was then called the "Nine Mile Woods." My cabin was situated seven miles from any cabin going

east, and two miles west. There were no inhabitants going south nearer than Batavia village. Here I kept bachelor's hall, sleeping in the open air on hemlock boughs until I had completed the roof of my cabin, which I covered with bark. I had to travel seven miles to get bread baked.

"In the winter of 1813-14, the British and Indians came over from Canada and massacred several of the inhabitants on the frontier, and many of the settlers fled out of the country for safety. The people throughout this region were in great consternation. The news of the approach of the savages spread rapidly. In



December 1813, the British burned Lewiston and news was brought to Capt. McCarty by the fleeing inhabitants, that British and Indians were coming east on the Ridge. He sent a messenger in the night.

"William Burlingame, who resided about four miles west of my place on the Ridge, called me out of bed and requested me to go immediately and arouse the people east. I immediately mounted my horse, the only horse then owned in the vicinity, and before next daylight visited all the inhabitants as far east as Clarkson.

"The effect of the notice was almost electric, for quite a regiment of men in number were on the move early the next morning, to check the advance of the enemy. The next night they came in sight of Molyneaux tavern, 10 or 12 miles east of Lewiston, and saw a light in the house. Captain McCarty halted his men and advanced himself to reconnoiter. Approaching the place he saw British and Indians in the house, their guns standing in a corner. He returned to his men and brought them cautiously forward; selected a few to follow him into the house, and ordered the remainder to surround it and prevent the enemy from escaping. McCarty and his party rushed in at the door and sprang between the men and their guns and ordered them to surrender.

"The British soldiers and

the Indians had been helping themselves to liquor in the tavern, and some were drunk and asleep on the floor. The surprise was complete. Most of the party surrendered; a few Indians showed fight with their knives and hatchets and tried to recover their guns, and several of them were killed in the melee. One soldier made a dash to get his gun and was killed by McCarty at a blow. The remainder surrendered and were put upon their march towards Lewiston, near which our army had then arrived. One prisoner would not walk. The soldiers dragged him forward on the ground a while, and getting tired of that, Henry Luce, one of McCarty's men, declared with an oath, he would kill him, and was preparing for the act, when McCarty interfered and saved his life."

John Proctor died in January 1868. He is remembered as the founder of Fair Haven, now known as Childs. He was an early settler on the historic Ridge Road in Gaines. Some sources claim he built the historic Cobblestone Church in Childs at his own expense and gave it to the First Universalist Society of Gaines. But perhaps the legendary story of Proctor warning the settlers in the wee hours of the advancement of British soldiers is how he is best remembered as "The Paul Revere of the Ridge."