

CINCINNATI



FOURTEEN

Newsletter of the Society of the Cincinnati

October 1988

Volume XXV No.1



Michael Marsland

Yale University Office of Public Information

**Seal of the Society of the Cincinnati Sterling Memorial Library
Yale University**

**THE YELLOW SPRINGS HOSPITAL -
DR. SAMUEL KENNEDY AND JOHN ROSE**

Remarks of Mrs. Margaret de Wetter
at the Annual Ladies' Day Luncheon of the Pennsylvania Society Yellow Springs,
Pennsylvania, April 23, 1988

It is particularly meaningful to me to be here today at Yellow Springs with members of the Pennsylvania Society of the Cincinnati. We are gathered on a day in late April, but we will be recalling that winter, the winter of 1777-1778, when General Washington and his troops camped at Valley Forge. It was then that Dr. Samuel Kennedy and the Baron Augustus von Wetter-Rosenthal lived and worked at Yellow Springs. Dr. Kennedy owned the land. On it he had a farm with at least three barns, barns whose importance grew with the distress of the winter.

Augustus von Rosenthal came to Yellow Springs because he was assigned to the hospital as Surgeon's Mate. He was a Baltic nobleman whose forebear had received the patent of nobility from Queen Christina of Sweden more than a hundred years earlier, but now Russia had replaced Sweden as the ruler of the Baltic States. In St. Petersburg Augustus had killed a man in a duel - an affair of honor it is said, dealing with an older relative who had been insulted. Subsequently exiled, Augustus fled to the American colonies and joined the Continental Army, using the *nom de guerre* of John Rose. When he joined Dr. Kennedy at Yellow Springs, however, he was using yet another name, "Gustavus Henderson?" That winter of 1777-1778 he was twenty-five years old.

Yellow Springs, a handful of miles west of Valley Forge, had long served as a health resort for the people of Philadelphia because of its medical springs and baths. These health-giving waters caused the site to be selected for the Revolutionary Army hospital. When Gustavus Henderson and Dr. Samuel Kennedy worked there, the hospital building was still a dream. Dr. Kennedy's three barns served as the hospital.

The local citizens were unenthusiastic about a general hospital in their vicinity. In fact, every community dreaded having a hospital located nearby because contagious diseases spread and took their toll from peaceful citizens as well as soldiers. Dr. Kennedy had opened the Lititz Hospital in a Moravian Community in December 1777, but transferred its patients in January 1778 to Yellow Springs.

Those were desperate times, the "times that try men's souls" - no time at all for a summer soldier or a sunshine patriot.

Picture him, the soldier from Valley Forge who came as a patient to Yellow Springs. His feet showed through his worn out shoes. His breeches were in tatters, his coat, if he had a coat, frayed. His face, pinched with the cold, was pale and drawn; his eyes filled with fear.

In 1778 Dr. Bodo Otto was appointed to command the hospital. Feeling a debt to his adopted country - for he was German born - he assumed his war duty when he was sixty-five. Of unusual professional dedication - stern and strong - he wore a white wig which contrasted with his blue eyes.

But before his arrival and before the building of the hospital itself, Dr. Kennedy and John Rose worked with the sick, using the supplies they had. If they were lucky the medicines on hand were tincture of cinnamon, chamomile, paregoric, castor oil, aromatic spirits of ammonia, oil of turpentine, laudanum liquid, cream of tartar, elixir of opium, ipecac, gum opium, aloes, Peruvian Bark, nutmeg, orange peel, camphor, mercury, and wine. They used pewter syringes, silver probes, tourniquets, crude scalpels, and amputating instruments.

The German farmers of the neighborhood collected meat, flour, potatoes, cabbages, straw, and clothing for the hospital and used their wagons as ambulances to transport the reluctant sick from Valley Forge to Yellow Springs. Reluctant? The soldiers knew that they had a better chance of surviving a battle than of surviving a hospital where one sick patient infected another.

And on those straw-covered barn floors what illnesses did the doctors treat? Scurvy; lime juice was an antidote. Smallpox; they tried inoculation with the result that one in three hundred of those they inoculated died. They treated dysentery which was gravely aggravated by camp sanitation; the sick soldiers could not pick their way on bare feet through the cold icy camp streets to the latrines.

And on those straw-covered barn floors what illnesses did the doctors treat? Scurvy; lime juice was an antidote. Smallpox; they tried inoculation with the result that one in three hundred of those they inoculated died. They treated dysentery which was gravely aggravated by camp sanitation; the sick soldiers could not pick their way on bare feet through the cold icy camp streets to the latrines.

Yellow Springs revisited. Before the ruins of Yellow Springs Hospital (L. to R.): S. Wylie



Milligan (PA), descendant of Dr. Samuel Kennedy, the Hospital's owner who died there in 1778; and Peter de Wetter (PA), whose propositus, John Rose (OM), served on the hospital's medical staff with Dr.

Kennedy

Pneumonia; the frigid weather, the lack of blankets, the poor food combined to make it a killer. The itch; this was a form of scabies which, when scratched, caused serious infections. But most dreaded of all was putrid fever. Sometimes it was called jail fever, or camp fever. Today we call it typhus, and recognize its carrier - the fleas that live on rats. But then they did not know that the straw on which a sick man had lain was vermin-filled and a source of infection for the next poor patient.

During the spring of 1778 the new hospital, the Medical Headquarters, whose ruined foundations can be seen near this building, was erected. Called Washington Hall, it had three stories and an attic, a rectangle of ten windows by two windows. It was one hundred six feet long, thirty -six feet wide.

But Washington Hall came too late for that terrible winter, and too late for Dr. Samuel Kennedy. The Reverend Dr. James Sproat, Chaplain, reported that on June 12,

1778 he had visited Yellow Springs to find the new hospital airy, but not yet finished. He wrote that he drank tea with the doctors and the matron but found Dr. Kennedy very sick. "I prayed with him;" he wrote. It did no good. On June 13 he found Dr. Kennedy no better. As Dr. Kennedy grew worse, 182 patients languished in the three hospital barns. The final entry in the Reverend Sproat's journal was dated August 3, 1778. "I lodged with Mrs. Kennedy in mournful circumstances.' The doctor had died of the disease which killed most of his patients, camp fever - typhus.

As to John Rose, he soon rejoined the Pennsylvania Line. In time he became Aide-de-Camp to General William Irvine. Surgeon's Mate no longer, he travelled with Irvine to his new command at Fort Pitt from which some of the last skirmishes of the Revolution were carried on. It was during this period that he accompanied Colonel Crawford on the ill-fated expedition to Sandusky in the Ohio Territory where the Colonel was captured and burned at the stake by the Delawares. It was there that John Rose also nearly perished but was, instead, able to lead most of Crawford's party back to Pitt.

In 1783, with what must have been considerable reluctance, Augustus von Wetter-Rosenthal boarded ship in New York to return to Europe, to the Court of Catherine the Great by whom he had been pardoned. He lived out his life in the Baltic province of Estonia where, after the turn of the century, he served as "hauptmann", head, of the nobility. It is said that he corresponded with General Irvine throughout that older man's life, and that he dreamed of returning to America someday. I picture him, watching the two-masted, ships sail from the harbor at Reval, a faraway look in his eyes. It is known that at state occasions he never failed to wear the Eagle of the Society of the Cincinnati.

Today, the descendants of at least four of the men mentioned in this story are present. Wylie Milligan claims Sam Kennedy as his own. Judge Rogers, the guest of Mr. Clifford Lewis, has the bright blue eyes of the capable Dr. Bodo Otto. John Winslow, who has joined us from Baltimore, represents General Irvine in the Society of the Cincinnati, and my husband, Peter de Wetter-Rosenthal, is the direct descendent of that onetime patriot, John Rose. Peter is the first generation of the Wetter-Rosenthal descent to have been born in America.

It is, as I said in the beginning, particularly wonderful to gather at Yellow Springs in remembrance.

V 25, #1, Oct 88, P 20

THE STATE SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI OF PENNSYLVANIA

Our annual Ladies' Day Luncheon on April 23 turned into a full day outing in Chester County, Pennsylvania. Our Luncheon Chairman, Clifford Lewis, 3rd arranged a most interesting and enjoyable day centered around the site of Yellow Springs Hospital, Yellow Springs, Pennsylvania. Here a presentation honoring three Revolutionary Hospital Medical Staff members was made possible by the generosity of two of our members: Samuel Wylie Milligan of Greeveville, Tennessee, a direct descendant of Dr. Samuel Kennedy, the owner of Yellow Springs Hospital land and a member of the Hospital staff who died there on June 17, 1778; and Peter de Wetter of San Marino, California, a direct descendant of Original Pennsylvania Cincinnati Gustavus Henderson, also known as Lieutenant John Rose, an exiled member of the Russian Czar's court, Baron Augustus Heinrich von Wetter-Rosenthal. Also honored was Dr. Bodo Otto, the Chief of the Hospital staff, represented by the Honorable Theodore Rogers, a distinguished Judge.

The highlight of the presentation was an all too brief talk by Margaret de Wetter, Peter's wife, who has done some invaluable research into the Revolutionary history of Yellow Springs Hospital. Her remarks, which are included elsewhere in this issue, provide an overview of the incredible happenings in the terrible winter of 1777-78 at Yellow Springs.

In addition to Mrs. de Wetter, we were honored to have with us Wylie Milligan's daughter, Miss Jayne Poitevent, and his other daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. James Stone Roberts (Betsy Milligan), all from New York City.

As mentioned above, the generosity of our two members enabled the Board at Yellow Springs to set up a dark room to begin processing their collection and to buy additional equipment. This was acknowledged in remarks by Sandra S. Momyer, the Executive Director of the Foundation.

The Cincinnati party adjourned to the Coventry Forge Inn (1717) for a gourmet luncheon followed by a visit to the interesting manor house immediately above the Inn. This was the home of Original Pennsylvania Member, and past early President, Colonel Caleb North, whose membership is now held by his direct descendant, the writer and Pennsylvania's Cincinnati Fourteen contributing editor.

Altogether a memorable day for the Society!

Philippus Miller, V
President

V 25, #1, Oct 88, P 39

ORIGINAL CINCINNATI WHO FIRST OPPOSED US IN THE REVOLUTION (cont'd)

The last issue of *Cincinnati Fourteen* contained an account of Karl Friedrich Fuhrer, a Hessian officer who was captured at Trenton and later switched sides and became an American officer. Commissioned as Captain Fuhrer in the Virginia forces, he was an Original Member of the Society.

In that article, History Editor Clifford Lewis noted that "switching sides to the American cause during the war was presumably rare, but just how often did a Cincinnati result?"

Mr. Lewis added that Pennsylvania had such an individual in Richard Dale who began in the British Navy but switched in time to be a Lieutenant with John Paul Jones on the *Bon Homme* Richard in the battle with the *Serapis*.

In response to Mr. Lewis' query, Dr. Calvin H. Currey, a member of the South Carolina Society, now brings to our attention Christian Senf, a military engineer who was captured with the Hessians at Saratoga and sent by Henry Laurens to be the State Engineer of South Carolina. He was appointed Captain Engineer in the Continental Service on November 29, 1788; as a Lieutenant Colonel of Engineers Senf opposed the surrender of Charlestown on May 12, 1780. In 1783 he became an Original Member of the Society of the Cincinnati of the State of South Carolina.

Are there other such members?

